



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The Only Publication authorized by the Hon W F Cody ("BUFFALO BILL")

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362 WEST ADAMS ST. NEAR MORGAN

CHICAGO, ILL. Price, Five Cents.

THE LOST STAGE COACH

OR
BUFFALO BILL'S LONG SEARCH



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

THE DARING

SCOUT, CROUCHING IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROCKS, RECOGNIZED THE FIRST RIDER AS CHIEF IRON-FACE, AND THE SECOND AS CAPTAIN RED-HAND.



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NEW YORK, July 27, 1901.

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE LOST STAGE COACH.

Terrible tidings had been brought in to Colonel Carr, commander of Fort Advance, for Jack Gerrard's coach on the Overland Trail had disappeared as utterly as though it had been swallowed up in some deep stream it had to cross on its way to the far military post to which it made semi-monthly trips.

There was no better driver on the Western stage trail, one who was more careful to protect his freight and passengers than was Jack Gerrard, and all at the fort felt that it had been something wholly out of the usual dangers of the road—from outlaws and Indians—which had brought disaster—a complete wipe-out, in fact—upon him, his coach, team and passengers—for, one and all, they had vanished.

The worst of it all was that there was a woman in the case, for it was known that Jack had as passenger a young girl, the daughter of Sergeant Frank Farrar, who, though only a non-commissioned officer at the fort, was admitted to have known better days, and was well worthy of a commission.

He was a man of over two-score years, a perfect type of the soldier, popular with officers and men, and was known as "the man of mystery," for no one seemed to know anything about his past life.

He had risked his life time and again to save others, had rescued the colonel once from death and many times had been mentioned officially for daring deeds.

It was a surprise one day when it was learned that the sergeant had asked the colonel if he could bring his daughter to the fort, for no one knew whether he was married or single.

The permission had been granted, a pleasant cabin had been assigned to the sergeant, and the wives of the officers had done all they could to make it a cheery home for the coming girl.

And it was upon Jack Gerrard's coach that the young girl had been expected, for so her father had written her to come.

What a blow it had been to the sergeant, one and all, in fact, when the coach failed to arrive and a search revealed no trace of it along the trail.

Buffalo Bill, then chief of scouts at the fort, had at once gone on a scout to solve the mystery, and what he discovered caused him to send back for a troop of cavalry, which were at once sent out under Lieutenant Walter Worthington, one of the most dashing and daring young officers at the fort.

The report of Buffalo Bill had been that the bridge across a cañon, through which ran a foaming torrent, had fallen into the stream, and the indications pointed to the coach having gone down with it.

But this Buffalo Bill did not believe was the case, for, as the coach had carried a valuable freight in the shape of money for the fort, as well as a fair passenger and a paymaster, the scout placed its complete disappearance not to having been engulfed in the seething stream, but to the band of outlaws, whose clever chief had thus tried to cover up his lawless act of robbery, perhaps of murder.

So it was that the scout had sent for aid, and, with Lieutenant Worthington and his troopers, with whom was also Sergeant Frank Farrar, stern, silent and anxious regarding the fate of his daughter, the search for the missing coach had been begun.

A week had passed away and then the chief of scouts had returned ahead of the command and made his report to Colonel Carr.

Far from the fallen bridge the ashes of a large camp fire had been found, in spite of every effort to destroy all traces of a trail leading to it.

In the ashes had been discovered iron work of the stage, which had been burned, though the large pieces had been taken out and thrown into the stream.

Then the trail was taken up from there, faint as it was, and followed to the retreat of the band of outlaws, where Jack Gerrard, the paymaster and the sergeant's daughter had been found—prisoners of the leader of the lawless band, Red Hand, as he was known.

Though supported by the Indians, the outlaws had been defeated, their prisoners rescued, and the Government money secured. The wife of the desperate Red Hand was found in her cabin home, kindly caring for Lu Farrar, the sergeant's daughter. Red Hand himself had escaped, with a few of his men, through being absent.

Such was the story that Buffalo Bill had to tell of the rescue and raid upon the outlaws' stronghold; but he had come to ask for help to go to beat back the large force of Indians, under their chief, Iron Face, who was the firm friend and ally of Red Hand.

"Lieutenant Worthington and his party should arrive to-morrow night, sir," concluded Buffalo Bill, "unless he has had to turn and fight back Iron Face and his braves for that devil Red Hand is with him and urging him on. He is most anxious to recapture his prisoners and booty and to rescue his wife.

"But we can strike them soon, sir, and protect the retreating force; also we can make it very interesting for Iron Face and his braves, while, I hope, sir, we can bring you Red Hand as a prisoner, or kill him," said Buffalo Bill, and he left for his quarters to prepare for the trail wholly unmindful of his having been for days and nights on a hard ride with but little rest.

Two hours later, in response to Colonel Carr's order, Captain Taylor and two troops of cavalry left the fort with Buffalo Bill riding ahead as guide and scout—a fact that gave perfect confidence to officers and men.

CHAPTER II.

THE AMBUSH.

Captain Taylor felt proud of his men as he rode out of the fort with them, seventy-five in number.

"They were picked men and horses, with rations for ten days, ammunition in plenty, and armed with the best weapons.

Half a dozen pack animals carried the outfit in the way of camping equipage, and the men were riding light for fast and hot work.

Buffalo Bill and ten scouts accompanied the expedition, bringing the force up to eighty-six fighters, all told.

The scout led the way, and, after they were well upon the trail, Captain Taylor rode forward and joined him.

The captain was a warm friend of the gallant scout, and had said to his lieutenants and surgeon before starting:

"The fact that Buffalo Bill is to be our guide, and we are to carry out some plan of his, makes success certain."

When he joined the scout, he said:

"Now, Bill, the colonel only gave me orders to get my men ready, and start on an expedition which you would explain, and to use my own discretion in regard to what was best to be done."

"Yes, captain, and I will explain the matter in a few words."

"You are just back from the expedition with Lieutenant Worthington?"

"Yes, sir."

"And it was a success?"

"Oh, yes; for we struck the outlaws' retreat, rescued the prisoners they had, got captives in return among the band of Red Hand, and lots of booty, cattle and horses."

"Good! And they had there Jack Gerrard's coach and passengers?"

"Yes."

"And the sergeant's daughter?"

"She's a beauty, captain, if that is what you wish to know," said Buffalo Bill, slyly.

"It was not what I asked, Bill, and I am sorry she is a beauty."

"Sorry, captain?" said the scout, with surprise.

"Yes; for she is only a sergeant's daughter, and I fear will for that reason be a sufferer from slights given her, and the object of attention from those officers who may not mean too well by her."

"Captain Taylor, when you see Miss Farrar, the sergeant's daughter, you will discover that she is just the girl to take care of herself, one whom no one can snub, and who will put herself in no position to feel a slight which rank may at times force upon her."

"I am glad of this, Bill; but, then, the sergeant is a gentleman, a man of certain power and reserve that commands respect from all his officers, and demands it from his inferiors."

"My idea of the man is that he has a secret history that would make a very entertaining story if known."

"What he has been, sir, he keeps a secret, and I am sure his daughter's coming to him was a surprise he had not expected; but he makes the best of it."

"Well, I am anxious to see the outcome of it all; but now, Bill, what are we to do?"

"You see, captain, Red Hand was not at his den, but off on a visit to old Iron Face; so we missed him."

"He no doubt discovered our raid, and in all probability pursued us with the chief Iron Face and his band. He may have come up with our party after I left them."

"I thought, by striking this trail from the fort, we could head them off, ambush them and perhaps capture the outlaw chief, at the same time giving another severe blow to the redskins."

"A splendid idea."

"I consulted with Lieutenant Worthington, and he told me to push on ahead and suggest it to the colonel, hinting that it would be a good idea to send you, captain, as he knew that you would push them hard."

"I'll do my best, and I'm thankful for the hint that gained me the chance; but it will break Worthington's heart not to also be in the fight."

"Yes, for he is a fighter from 'way back, and handles troops like a veteran."

"He has covered himself with glory in this expedition, and will get a captain's straps for it, or I am greatly mistaken."

"He commanded well, captain, and will make a great name for himself as an Indian fighter, for he would rather fight than eat."

"Well, we must back him up by making a success of our expedition."

"We will."

"How far will we have to go?"

"I wish to ambush them at the ford of the river, catching them as they come over and enter the pass, for, with a few men on the other shore, we can cut them off if they retreat and have them in a place where we can hit them hard."

"And their force, Cody?"

"As well as I could judge, captain, in their pursuit and attack, about three hundred warriors, though, of course, they may have sent for more braves, which we can look out for."

"That is right."

"Yes, it was for that reason I brought so many of my scouts, as they can be on guard while we are lying in wait, to report any force coming from the Indian villages."

"Well, with my seventy-four gallant fellows, and you and your brave scouts, I do not fear any force less than a thousand, if it comes to a square fight. I suppose you wish to push on hard?"

"Yes, captain; for should they come on more rapidly than I believe they will, we will just be on time, and be able to get into position. The horses will then have a chance to rest."

It was late at night when the command went into camp for supper and a few hours' rest, and when dawn broke they had been in the saddle for an hour, again on the march.

At noon they had reached the pass, and an hour after were in ambush, for the Indians had not yet passed there in their pursuit of Lieutenant Worthington and his party.

The situation chosen by Buffalo Bill as the right spot to place an ambush for the approaching redskins was formed by Nature in a way to suit the scout's views exactly.

There the river was broad, saddle-girth deep, dotted with rocks that formed rapids, and with a swift current.

The fording place was not over a hundred yards wide, with deeper water above and below.

The trail on the opposite side led down a steep and rugged hillside to the river. On the shore where the soldiers were there was a rocky lowland for a couple of hundred yards, and then the trail led into a narrow cañon several miles through to a valley beyond.

The scout and the soldiers had crossed the river at a ford some miles below, and had picked their way up along the lowland bank to the pass, thus leaving no trail.

The horses had been staked out in a grass-covered swale beyond a ridge of rocks and willows, which hid them completely, and several soldiers were left to guard and care for them.

Across the river half a dozen scouts and twice as many soldiers had gone, crossing on horses which had then been led back again, and these men, under a lieutenant, had taken up a position to advance when the fight began and thus check the redskins in a measure if they retreated. However, their retreat would not be entirely checked, for there was another ford a dozen miles up the river.

The rest of the scouts were sent through the cañon, to give timely notice of any force advancing from that

direction, which was unlikely, as the Indian village was not on that side of the river.

This left Captain Taylor, Buffalo Bill and about sixty soldiers to go into ambush at the mouth of the pass, so as to command the ford.

The ambush had not been formed a moment too soon for a signal came from one of the scouts on the opposite shore to be on the lookout, as the Indians were approaching.

The scout signaled from a hilltop from which he had a view of the trail beyond the ridge for half a dozen miles.

"They have come up more rapidly than I expected they would, sir," said Buffalo Bill.

"Well, we are ready for them, or soon will be," answered Captain Taylor, and he ordered his men into their positions of hiding, scattered among the rocks on the steep side of the ridge which the cañon, or pass, split in twain.

"They are pushing to cross the river and rest their horses for a while right in front of us," added the scout.

"Well, they won't get there, Bill, if we can help it."

"No, captain; but I hope that Red Hand is along."

"Yes, and I have given all the men orders not to fire on him, for he must be taken alive and hanged."

Buffalo Bill nodded his agreement, and then turned to go to his point of observation, for he was to give the signal when to open fire.

The scout took up his position among the rocks at a point that gave him a good view of the ford and approach to the pass.

The defeat of the redskin army under Chief Iron Face some time before, and again in the attack of the rescue party under Lieutenant Worthington, Buffalo Bill felt would be two lessons they would never forget, while the ambush then laid for them would really strike a blow along the frontier for some time to come.

While the chief of scouts was thus musing, the man on the hilltop across the river waved his flag three times around his head.

It was the expected signal.

It meant, "The Indians are coming."

CHAPTER III.

A LONE CHASE.

Watching the top of the distant ridge, shielded by a rock and pine bush, Buffalo Bill saw a redskin horseman ride into view.

The scouts had already skipped to their hiding-places.

The Indian halted a moment, gazing at the scene as though enjoying the picturesque beauty spread out before him.

Then he rode quickly on down the trail.

Soon after, half a dozen other horsemen appeared, and behind them came a band of thirty, at their head riding two men whose appearance at once riveted the scout's gaze.

"There they are—the chief and Captain Red Hand."

They were riding side by side, and behind them came their immediate body guard of warriors.

Following this party were a number of Indian ponies dragging *travois*, bearing the Indian dead and wounded, for they had rigged up a means of carrying the bodies and the injured from the field. At the top of the ridge, the party having in charge these *travois* branched off on another trail which led to the Indian village.

The main body of the Indians, however, some two hundred in number, swept on down the hill, and by the time the last of these, the rear guard, had crossed the ridge, the advance was in the river.

Stopping for their horses to drink, those in advance were quickly overtaken by those in the rear, and the whole party were heaped together.

When the advance reached the shore where Buffalo Bill and the rest were hidden, they at once turned off for the lowland beyond the ledge and willows, as Buffalo Bill had surmised they would do.

When about half the force had crossed and the balance were in the river, Buffalo Bill decided to give his signal to Captain Taylor.

The Indians had ridden along strangely silent and subdued, evidently pondering over their heavy losses of late and hoping for revenge.

Not a thought of danger so near ahead disturbed them, until suddenly, echoing from cliff to cliff, clear, wild and terrible, rang out the well-known warcry of Buffalo Bill.

It at once caused a terrible scene of excitement in the Indian ranks, which was added to when Captain Taylor's

commanding voice called to his men to fire, and three score carbines rattled forth showers of leaden hail.

Ponies and warriors went down; the redskin braves shrank back, staggered, bleeding and demoralized.

Some answered the fire of death with defiant warcries and shots, and those in the river began to retreat.

Again the carbines flashed, and in one mass of confusion and terror the redskins began the retreat back across the river, just as the scouts and troopers sent to the opposite shore opened a hot fire upon them.

But they seemed to realize that their greatest danger lay ahead of them, and they surged frantically back upon the trail by which they had come, leaving their dead and dying behind, and driven to desperation by the savage blows dealt upon them.

But there was one who did not turn back with the others.

He had started to do so, hesitated and then, deciding upon his course, had wheeled to the right and dashed up along the river bank, on the same side of which was the main body of soldiers.

It was the quickest way to get out from under that terrible death-dealing fire.

It was the outlaw chief, and he went alone, for no redskin saw, or, if seeing, followed his example, and their young chief had pointed to retreat the way they had come.

The soldiers, remembering their orders, did not fire at the flying chief, and Buffalo Bill was not able to do so in time to check his flight, being down the stream from the ford.

But he saw his act, and, leaping out of cover, ran, at the risk of his life—for the bullets of the redskins pattered about him—to where the pony of a chief had halted, his rider having been slain.

Leaping upon the back of the animal, he had turned him in chase of the fugitive outlaw, to find the horse was of little speed.

Instantly he wheeled about, and dashing the spurs into his flanks he drove him at full speed down toward where the troop's horses were corraled.

In a few moments he dashed out of the willow thicket, mounted upon his own splendid horse Lucifer, and went off like a rocket in pursuit of the outlaw.

"Don't mind me, Captain Taylor, for I want that man's scalp, and you have won the fight," called out Buffalo

Bill, as he dashed by Captain Taylor, who, with his men, had now come out of ambush and were preparing to mount their horses as they were brought up by the men in charge of them, to make a show of pursuit of the Indians.

Captain Taylor made reply, but Buffalo Bill did not hear him as he dashed away, a lone pursuer upon the outlaw's trail.

The redskins had been rallied from their panic by the skill and cool courage of their chief, Iron Face.

He had quickly realized that the ambush had been ahead, that the scattering shots from the opposite shore showed but a small force in their rear for effect, and that his course was to recross and strike up the river bank, especially as a mile away there was a place where he could make a stand and beat back the soldiers on his track.

He picked up what wounded he could, but felt compelled to leave his dead, and, in solid force, crossed the river in spite of the double fire now poured upon him.

He saw that the outlaw chief had acted wisely in the course he had pursued, but, then, he could not have rallied his warriors to go in that direction, so did the next best thing and recrossed the river.

It was his intention to hurl his whole force upon the small party there and wipe them out; but this had been anticipated by Captain Taylor and Buffalo Bill, and orders had been given the men in charge of the horses to bring them up the moment they saw the Indians attempt to recross the river.

This they did, and the quick-mounted pursuit saved the soldiers and scouts across the stream.

Forcing his wounded on ahead, Iron Face rallied his braves in the rear to retreat slowly and protect them, and showers of bullets and arrows were fired upon the soldiers as they crossed the river in chase.

But they did not dare tarry long, for from the rocks the little band on the ridge poured a hot fire upon them, forcing them to quicken their pace and give up all idea of displacing them in the short time they had to do it in.

It was true that the redskins emptied half a dozen saddles and brought down twice as many horses as the troopers crossed the river, but it did not check them, and the pursuit was pressed so hotly by Captain Taylor that the Indians were forced into a run in spite of their chief's cries for them to make a stand.

Reaching the rocks where they could make a stand, they halted, and Captain Taylor wisely and promptly checked the pursuit, knowing that he would lose heavily and that the Indians would continue their flight. At any rate, their pursuit of Lieutenant Worthington and his party had been effectually stopped, and, no doubt, the Indians would branch off toward their village.

The captain, however, had seen several couriers ride on ahead, and he knew this meant a rapid run to the village for aid, and that by morning, or soon after, a force would be upon him which he could not withstand.

There was, then, but one thing for him to do, and that was to make a show of pursuit until nightfall, and then retreat for the fort at once.

A council was quickly held among the officers, and two scouts were ordered, as soon as darkness came on, to recross the river and go back ahead to the fort by the trail they had come, with dispatches for Colonel Carr. It was possible that the Indians would advance by another trail and attack the fort in their frenzy.

The rest of the command, after burying their dead comrades, would retreat as fast as they were able, carrying their wounded with them.

The redskins' dead and wounded would be left to the care of the braves who would come in the morning to look after them, when they would find the soldiers gone.

"But what about Cody?" said Captain Taylor, when their plans had been arranged.

"I fear he has placed himself in a very perilous position," said the captain of the troop that had come with Captain Taylor's own command.

"He went off on the track of that outlaw like a whirlwind; but it a dangerous undertaking, as the man being pursued can go into ambush and kill his pursuer."

"Yes, captain, and he will cross the upper ford, without doubt, and try to lead Buffalo Bill in the direction of the Indian village. So, if he pursues the outlaw far he will be between the redskins coming from their camp and those now in retreat," said a lieutenant.

CHAPTER IV.

MISSING.

The soldiers were anxious to get away, for they had no help. They knew their weakness, and were well aware of the strength the Indians could bring against them within twelve hours.

By a night retreat they could go many miles before halting to camp for rest and food.

Then after another ride before dawn and after, by the time they halted for breakfast they would be many miles from the scene of conflict just about the time the Indian reinforcements were arriving there.

With such a start they had nothing to fear, for no matter if hundreds of warriors were in the saddle against them they would not dare venture far across the river in pursuit, after the deadly lessons they had lately received.

The scouts left on the scene, with a night's rest for their horses, would easily distance all pursuit as far as the Indians would venture, for they would expect to be led into an ambush.

But it was the absence of Buffalo Bill that troubled Captain Taylor and all of his men.

The chief of scouts had dashed away in pursuit of his bitterest foe.

He had gone alone, and if he had crossed the upper ford, he was now on the Indian side of the river, where small bands of hunters might be met at any moment.

He had gone in chase of a man who was skilled in border craft, cunning, fearless and dangerous, and was as artful as a redskin.

A man who had had his band of outlaws wiped out by the very man who pursued him, who had been forced to fly to safety among the Indians, and whose treasures had been taken from him, and whose wife also had gone with his enemies.

Was it a wonder, then, that he would seek revenge upon Buffalo Bill and risk his life to get it?

The scout, anxious also to capture the outlaw chief, would strain every nerve and take chances that at another time he would not do.

These thoughts flashed through Captain Taylor's mind, and he told his officers how he felt regarding the safety of the scout, and they, too, shared his anxiety.

And yet to have remained on the river bank awaiting his return would have been madness, so the order to march had been given as soon as darkness fell, and just as the Indians, too, were pulling out in hot haste for their village.

The dead were carried across by the soldiers, to bury when they made their camp, and the wounded were cared for as well as circumstances would admit.

During the night march one of the worst wounded of the troopers died, but his body was strapped upon one of the captured Indian ponies and carried along with the others.

It was just an hour before midnight when the scout who was guiding, and who had been on the trail before, led the way to a camp where water, wood and grass were plentiful.

The tired horses were staked out, fires were built, supper cooked, and graves were dug for the dead, while the surgeon dressed the wounds of those who most needed his aid.

Then supper was served, sentinels placed and the tired troopers threw themselves down and slept soundly.

Buffalo Bill's guards were the self-imposed sentinels, for, like their chief, they had wonderful powers of endurance and were glad to let the soldiers rest.

After four hours' rest they roused the camp, as ordered by Captain Taylor, and fifteen minutes afterward the march was again begun.

Until eight o'clock they held on, and then a halt was made for breakfast, and a long rest, for there was no danger of pursuit then, and Captain Taylor was anxious to have the scouts overtake him.

It was nearly noon when the two who had been left on the ridge arrived.

They reported the hasty retreat of the Indians under Iron Face, the arrival of several hundred warriors soon after sunrise, but Buffalo Bill had not joined them during the night.

A gloom fell upon all, for the dread came that Buffalo Bill had met his doom at last.

Captain Taylor called his officers together and held a council of war.

It was at last decided that as the expedition had been simply to ambush the Indians and administer to them a severe lesson, this having been accomplished, there was nothing left to be done but to return to the fort and report the result, with the fact that Buffalo Bill was missing, and it was feared harm had befallen him.

Then several of the scouts came up and asked to be allowed to remain behind and search for their chief.

This request was granted, Captain Taylor calling for volunteers, and Hugh Hardin and four of his scout comrades went back on the trail in search of Buffalo Bill, while the troopers continued on toward Fort Advance.

It was a sad march of the troopers back to the fort, for another of the wounded men died on the way, running the death-roll up to seven men, with twice as many wounded.

However, they had accomplished their purpose, hit the redskins a terrible blow, slaying many of them, wounding many more and capturing half a hundred ponies.

But there was gloom upon account of Buffalo Bill's disappearance, more sorrow being felt for the popular scout's fate than for the dead soldiers.

Soldiers could be replaced, there were many of them, but only one Buffalo Bill, the idol of plainsmen, and one whose fame was earned by deeds of desperate daring.

After an absence of five days the command came in sight of the fort.

All hoped to find Buffalo Bill there, and the first question of Captain Taylor was:

"Has Cody arrived?"

"No, Taylor, and we hoped that he was with you, for his two men returned and reported him missing," answered the officer of the day.

Captain Taylor at once went to headquarters to report to Colonel Carr, who was seated upon his piazza, and said, quickly:

"Glad to see you back, Captain Taylor, and congratulate you upon your victory, which the scouts brought news of; but is Cody with you?"

"No, Colonel Carr, I hoped to find him here."

"No, he's not here. His two men reported that he went off alone in chase of the outlaw chief."

"He did, sir, and has not been seen since."

"This is bad, very bad; but he is like a cat and may yet turn up, for I've set him down as dead many a time."

"I hope he's safe, for our victory was owing wholly to him, and it was one the redskins will remember."

"We lost men killed and wounded, sir, for it was a hot fight for a while when we pressed the Indians across the river; but we gained the day, though Cody's loss cast a damper over all."

"I felt it best to return to the fort, sir, over the Indians' trail, but I left Hugh Hardin and four other scouts to look for Buffalo Bill."

"Heaven grant they may find him, and Hardin is the man to do it if any one can."

"If they do not return with him to-morrow, I will send

out another searching party, for Lieutenant Walter Worthington has asked to go."

"It will be a good idea, sir; but I was glad to see Worthington back again."

"Yes, and he has crowned himself with glory, for, guided by Buffalo Bill, as you know, he rescued Jack Gerrard and his passengers, among them being the sergeant's daughter."

"She is one of the most beautiful girls I ever beheld, and who is going to raise the deuce with the young officers of the fort, I fear, for I cannot drive into their heads that she is only a sergeant's daughter."

"And the outlaw's wife is here, too, sir?"

"Yes, and another beautiful woman she is. She has been very ill, but is recovering rapidly, and is at the sergeant's quarters with his daughter, thus relieving me of having an outlaw's wife for a guest; but, poor woman, she is a lady, refined and pure hearted, and was deceived in the man she married, so is wholly guiltless herself of any wrong."

"I hope the news will not reach her that Buffalo Bill went off on a hunt for her husband and on that account is missing."

"I trust not; but bad news travels fast, and the story will have gone the rounds of the fort by this time, as the soldiers have told it."

"I fear so, sir; but we noticed the stake trail as we came along."

"Oh, yes, Jack Gerrard took a coach out again, with no fear this time of either Red Hand or Indians."

"But you need a rest, Taylor, so I'll not detain you, and again I congratulate you upon your success."

Thanking the colonel, the captain retired to his quarters, where a few moments later Sergeant Farrar came and asked for an interview.

"I am glad to hear that your daughter was restored to you, sergeant," said the captain, after he had greeted him, "and trust that she is well, and also your invalid guest."

"Yes, sir, my daughter is well and loves the life here while Mrs. Lamar is improving rapidly; but I came to ask you regarding the chief of scouts, sir, for it is said that he is thought to have been killed, and by the outlaw chief?"

"It is only surmise, sergeant, as Cody dashed off in pursuit of the outlaw, and did not return."

"Five of his scouts are searching for him, and if they do not return with news to-morrow, the colonel will send out a search party after him."

"I should like to go along, sir, and have a hand in his rescue, for I owe more than life to him, sir, in returning to me my child."

"I will speak to the colonel for you, then, and it will be Lieutenant Worthington who commands the party."

"Then if Buffalo Bill can be found, sir, he is the one to do it," earnestly said the sergeant, and he added:

"I will report to Mrs. Lamar and my daughter, then, that Buffalo Bill is only missing, for they urged me to come to you and ask about him, sir," and the sergeant returned to his quarters.

CHAPTER V.

THE SEARCH.

The fort was a strong one, with stockade walls and earthen breastworks. It was delightfully situated and was surrounded by beautiful scenery, while game of all kinds abounded near, rendering it a most desirable post for officers and their families.

There were a number of officers' wives and children at the fort, a school for the latter, also a chapel in which the chaplain officiated on Sunday, and a dancing hall.

Colonel Carr was an ideal officer, a perfect disciplinarian, but courteous and kind to all, and life at Fort Advance, in spite of its dangerous situation, was much enjoyed by all dwellers there.

Buffalo Bill, as chief of scouts, and on account of his record and personal attractions as well, received the same respect and consideration bestowed upon a commissioned officer, and with one and all he was a favorite.

His late brilliant deeds had endeared him still more to all, and there was a cloud of gloom hovering about every cabin and camp fire as long as his fate was unknown and it was feared that he had met his death.

Particularly were his corps of scouts anxious over him, and, though he had been reported killed and looked upon as dead time and again before, yet it seemed now that he must have been slain, or why had he not returned to camp?

If he had been captured by the Indians, all knew what a terrible death would be his.

That the five scouts who had gone back to look for

some trace of him did not return looked ominous for Buffalo Bill.

In the officers' club the missing scout was the only theme of conversation, and all felt relieved when the word went round that Lieutenant Walter Worthington had volunteered to go out with a party and find him or know what had befallen him.

That dashing young officer was the idol of the soldiers, and he had a way of getting at rock-bottom facts when sent on any mission, and of accomplishing such wonders that the truth would soon be known if he started out in search of the chief of scouts, and Colonel Carr had promised to allow him to go if the five men then absent did not return that day.

In the home of Sergeant Farrar the tension was great regarding Buffalo Bill's continued absence.

The part the scout had taken in the rescue of Lu Farrar had greatly endeared him to the sergeant, while his daughter had learned to admire the brave man, and was drawn toward him by ties of the strongest friendship.

The outlaw's wife, Mildred Lamar, had nearly regained her strength again, after her long sickness, but the suspense she was in could not but retard her recovery.

She had once dearly loved her husband, believing him noble and true; but her idol had been shattered when she found him to be a vile murderer and robber.

Freed from him by going to the fort with his fair captive, Lu Farrar, she had hoped never to hear of him again.

But in vain the hope, for the truth became known to her that he had allied himself with Indians, openly leading them against Lieutenant Worthington and Buffalo Bill's rescue party, and then, when attacked by Captain Taylor's command, he had been at their head with the chief Iron Face.

Pursued by Buffalo Bill, the fate of the scout and the outlaw chief were unknown, and hence the suspense fell heavily upon the wife, more so than upon others.

Had she known that her lawless husband was dead she could have rested content, but that he might have killed Buffalo Bill and was still living for further red deeds was a cruel burden to bear.

As night came on the sentinel reported a party of horsemen coming down the trail.

They were counted, and found to be five in number.

They were then recognized as Hugh Hardin and his four comrades, left behind to find their chief.

Buffalo Bill was not among them.

Upon arrival at the fort, Hugh Hardin went to headquarters to make his report.

They had scouted up and down the river, and discovered that the Indians had placed camps of sentinels at each of the three fords, so that they could not cross to reconnoiter on the other side.

They had found no trace of Buffalo Bill, and in vain tried to capture a brave to learn, if they could, if he had been killed or captured.

That the outlaw chief, Captain Red Hand, had not been killed was certain, for all of the scouts had seen him, with Chief Iron Face, ride to the redskin camp at the ford and scan the shores across the river with his glass.

The dead Indians and the wounded had all been removed by their comrades, and no one else than themselves, the five scouts, had been seen on the other shore of the river.

Believing and hoping that Buffalo Bill had escaped death or capture, they had returned to the fort, trusting to find him there and to make their report.

Colonel Carr listened to the report of Scout Hugh Hardin with a clouded brow.

It seemed to foreshadow the fate of Buffalo Bill.

"Well, Hardin, you have done your duty, all that you could do, and were right in returning. But you are sure that it was the outlaw chief that you saw?"

"Yes, sir."

"There could be no mistake?"

"None, sir, for we all looked at him closely through my glass, and we were just across the river from him.

"He came up to the Indian camp with Iron Face, and seemed to be giving orders, and I guess he was the one to establish the camps at the fords."

"How many redskins were in the sentinel camps?"

"All of fifty, sir."

"At each ford?"

"Yes, sir."

"You went to each ford?"

"We did, sir."

"And they just camped there?"

"Yes, sir; but they had scouts patrolling up and down the river, we could see, and once or twice we thought they were coming across, and then we intended to capture

them; but they thought better of it, and never ventured more than half way over."

"I don't like the idea of your seeing the outlaw leader."

"No, sir; nor do I, for it shows that Chief Cody did not kill him."

"That is certain. Had he done so, Cody might have had to go into hiding, and be all right until he could escape; but seeing the chief leads to the belief, knowing how cunning and treacherous he is—yes, and plucky, too, I must admit—that Cody met death at his hands, for your chief is not one to give up a trail he has started upon, and he was certainly hot upon the heels of that man when he was last seen by Captain Taylor."

"He was sir, as I also saw; and more, he was mounted upon his horse Lucifer, the fleetest animal in the West, sir."

The colonel shook his head sadly, and soon after dismissed the scout, just as Lieutenant Worthington made his appearance.

"Pardon me, Colonel Carr, but I have come to request that I may go at once in search of Scout Cody."

"I was just going to send for you, Lieutenant Worthington. Sit down, and we will talk it over. I have just had a report from Scout Hardin that he could find no trace of his chief, that the three fords are guarded on the other side of the river by fifty Indians, and he saw both the redskin chief and the outlaw visiting these sentinel posts."

"That means, sir, that the outlaw captain was not killed?"

"Yes, he is not dead."

"The scouts were sure?"

"Yes."

"It looks as though Buffalo Bill might have been killed, then, by the outlaw?"

"I am sorry to say it has that appearance, Worthington."

"May I not go now, sir, and try to ascertain the real situation?"

"You may do so, as I before told you; but what is your idea about going?"

"Sergeant Farrar is anxious to go, sir, so Captain Taylor informs me, and I would wish for no better man."

"Very true; but you surely would not go only with the sergeant?"

"No, sir; for I would like to have Scouts Palmer, Har-

din and four others of their comrades whom these two may select, along with Corporal Kane and eight of my troop, sir, picked men and horses all of them."

"That would give you sixteen men under your command?"

"Yes, sir, six of whom are Buffalo Bill's own men, nine of my own troop, and Sergeant Farrar, who is a host in himself."

"Very true," said the colonel, and then was silent a moment in thought.

Then he said:

"Lieutenant Worthington, I have every confidence in the world in you, and I also feel that a small force is better than a large one, so I am willing you shall go, but I desire to send with you also Surgeon Mead, for you may need his services.

"Then, too, I will send an officer, your inferior in rank, of course, with thirty men and a light gun to be within close call, should you need aid, on the trail Buffalo Bill led Captain Taylor by, and a like number with a gun by the trail Taylor returned by, to camp at certain points you may designate where they can be called upon, if necessary, or you can retreat to.

"Of course, with each command I will send several scouts, and thus aided, by knowing you have relief at hand, you can venture much more than otherwise would be prudent, and you know the Indians are just now in a frenzied mood at their losses and defeats."

"I thank you, Colonel Carr, for your kindness, for this aid you give will be of great benefit, sir.

"I will talk over the matter with Hardin and Palmer, and decide upon the camps for the relief forces to remain, and inform you, sir; and I would like to make a start to-night, with your leave, they starting at dawn."

"You can do so, starting when you will."

"I will now go and see the sergeant, sir, and——"

"Had I not better send my orderly, lieutenant?" asked the colonel, with a sly twinkle in his eyes.

"No, thank you, sir; I'll not trouble you," was the innocent response of the young officer.

The colonel laughed, and Walter Worthington's face flushed, while his commander said:

"The orderly would have done had not the sergeant had a pretty daughter, lieutenant; but go ahead on the errand yourself, though I really believe that you will find the sergeant at the armory."

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE SCOUT.

A dashing, handsome fellow was Worthington, with courage that had been severely tried. Socially, or around the camp fire, he was a genial comrade, ever courteous, and with a fine tenor voice, playing the guitar well, and he was a splendid conversationalist, the very one to catch the eye of a maiden and become a hero to her.

He had half the young girls at the fort in love with him, was popular with the married ladies, old and young, and, though lectured frequently by the former, was never looked upon as a fast man in the real sense of the word.

He was a favorite also with his brother officers, while his men would follow him wherever he bade them do so, and they held perfect confidence in his ability as an officer as well.

After his return with the stage-coach passengers, rescued from Red Hand, with Buffalo Bill, he was regarded as having again made a hero of himself.

Once in the fort, however, and, though courteous, he could not be regarded as being on visiting terms with the sergeant's daughter.

Out of respect to Sergeant Farrar the officers had called once upon his daughter, to congratulate her upon her rescue and welcome her to the fort, but that must end all social intercourse, of course.

Walter Worthington, however, had been to the cabin several times, to see how the outlaw's wife was convalescing, and his brother officers began already to gossip over the fact.

The sergeant's home was certainly as attractive as any in the fort, after Lu had unpacked her traps and beautified it in various ways, while, as far as the occupants went—save for rank—the difference between a commissioned and non-commissioned officer—the sergeant, his daughter and Mrs. Lamar were as thoroughly refined, educated and entertaining as any other household of the fort, and this had been admitted by all the officers and their wives who had gone there.

When Lieutenant Worthington now visited the quarters, he was met by old Polly, a negress who was a nurse for the outlaw's wife.

"Walk in, sah; but de sergeant he am not here, though Miss Lu is, sah."

"I would like to see Miss Farrar a moment, if agreeable to her, Aunt Polly," said the young officer.

"Yas, sah, it's agreeable, I knows," and, ushering him into the little parlor, Aunt Polly, who had the highest admiration for the lieutenant, went to acquaint Lu with his presence.

The sergeant's daughter came in just as she was, with a most charming morning gown on.

She looked very beautiful, and in her sweet, fascinating manner received the lieutenant.

She did not offer her hand, for she had already learned the difference in rank, but took his when he extended it, and asked:

"Will you be seated, Lieutenant Worthington, for Mrs. Lamar wishes to see you, sir."

"Thank you, I will for a few minutes, but your father is not here?"

"No, sir; he is on duty. I will send after him, if you desire it."

"Please do so, and tell him to come at once."

Re-entering the room, Lu asked:

"Will you tell me, Lieutenant Worthington, if the scouts heard of or found out anything of Chief Cody?"

"Nothing, I regret to say."

"It will be terrible if harm has befallen him, sir, for he is a man that cannot be replaced."

"No, Cody's match could not be found, that is certain; but I am going to-night in search of him, and your father is to accompany me."

"He will be so glad to do so; but——" and, after a moment of hesitation, she said:

"But you are going upon a very dangerous errand, Lieutenant Worthington, and I hope you will not venture too much, for, you know, my father will be with you; but here is Mrs. Lamar."

As Lu spoke the beautiful wife of the outlaw came into the room.

She was pale, and looked worn and weak; but she greeted the officer pleasantly and said:

"I wish to thank you, Lieutenant Worthington, now that I am, I may say, well again, for all your kindness to me in the dangerous march here—a brother could not have done more for me, and I will always remember you with gratitude."

"Do not speak of it, Mrs. Lamar; for, I assure you, I only did my duty as a soldier and a man."

"But there is a way of doing one's duty, sir, that cannot but impress the one who receives a kindness, and you have felt all your goodness to me; but now let me ask if there is any news of the chief of scouts?"

"None, I regret to say; but I may tell you that—that your——"

"My husband, the outlaw, lieutenant, for such he is," said Mrs. Lamar, bitterly.

"Well, Mrs. Lamar, he was seen by the scouts, so is not dead; and now I am going out to try and find Cody."

"I hope that you take a large force with you, sir."

"On the contrary, I go with Surgeon Mead, Sergeant Farrar, a corporal and eight men and six scouts, all being picked men, while I will also be supported, for there is no knowing what may happen—— Here is the sergeant now," and Sergeant Farrar entered the room, saluting as he did so.

The two then had a conversation together, the ladies, at the request of the lieutenant, remaining, while the sergeant remained standing, though requested by the officer to be seated.

Later Lieutenant Worthington rode away from the fort with his command while the sun was yet two hours high.

He wished to press on to a camping ground thirty miles away, and, with an early start the following morning, to be able to reach the scene of the late battle while it was broad daylight.

With his scouts well ahead, they would soon discover if the Indians were still encamped at the ford, and the two other crossings could be reconnoitered to discover if they were also guarded.

If the three crossings of the river were guarded, then there must be some way planned to capture a redskin, or get across to the other shore and begin a scout in search of Buffalo Bill.

No one doubted for an instant that he had crossed the upper ford in pursuit of Red Hand.

The camping place was reached in good time, supper was eaten, guards placed, and the command was soon fast asleep.

But they made an early start, and it was while the sun was yet an hour above the horizon that the halt was called within a few miles of the center of the three fords to await the reports of the scouts sent to see if they were still guarded.

The scout sent to the lower ford first returned and reported having seen the Indians encamped on the other shore, for he had seen half a hundred ponies staked out, but no redskin visible.

The next scout to report was Palmer, who had gone to the middle ford, the main trail across the river, and the scene of Captain Taylor's fight with the Indians.

He had surveyed the other shore with his glass and had discovered an Indian sentinel among the rocks, but could not see others, though he was sure they were there.

It was just at sunset when the third scout returned. He had gone to the upper of the three fords, riding ahead of the command slowly in the morning, and he had discovered a camp of about half a hundred Indians on the other shore.

This proved that the Indians were still guarding the ford, either from the fact that they expected a raid from the soldiers in force, or knew that Buffalo Bill was on their side, of the river and they wished to prevent his crossing back again, for the banks of the stream were such that only crossings at the three fords could be made for many long miles.

As he was now convinced that there was no chance of crossing the river save by strategy, Lieutenant Worthington decided to move his command to a good camping place a mile back from the center ford, and from there send his scouts out to work.

The rendezvous for the two commands to come to his support were to be on the river trail, and the one across the country, some twenty miles from his camping place.

The camp was reached after nightfall, but Hardin knew it well, and it was found to be a very secure hiding place, with fine pasturage for the horses, a good stream and wood in plenty, though cooking could only be done at night, as the smoke in the daytime would betray them to the Indians.

That night the lieutenant, leaving Sergeant Farrar in command, went with Scouts Hardin and Palmer and reconnoitered to the ford.

They saw the glimmer of the Indian camp fires upon the other side, and the young officer said:

"I shall see to-morrow if we cannot trap a redskin, for some of them must cross to this side. We will lie in wait for them."

So the next day the scouts and soldiers were in ambush

all day, but no redskins came across the stream, though at times a dozen or more were discovered on the other side.

"May I suggest a plan to catch one, sir?" said Sergeant Farrar.

"Certainly, sergeant."

"My horse is trained, sir, and I will take position myself to-morrow before dawn down among the rocks, and he will stay about feeding near me.

"He will come at my low call, and the redskins, seeing him and thinking he is a stray animal, will send across to catch him.

"Seeing him he will draw near to me, and I can catch him with a lasso, for hardly will more than one come across, but should more come I will retreat up the trail, the horse will follow and he will draw them into an ambush."

"The very thing, sergeant, and you shall carry it out as you have planned," said the lieutenant.

The next morning the sergeant was in position before daybreak and his horse, stripped of saddle and bridle, was feeding near him.

The position chosen was a good one, for, from the other side, no one could see what occurred unless they were just directly opposite.

It was about an hour after sunrise when, from his point of observation, Lieutenant Worthington saw an Indian horseman ride into view on the other side.

CHAPTER VII.

A PRISONER AND A TEST.

Being the sentinel on duty the Indian could not be seen from the camp of the other Indians, and he was anxious to get possession of his prize before any one else knew of its being there.

That the horse had gotten away from the soldiers, after the battle, he believed, and he certainly had the appearance of being a very fine animal.

So, when he got near the horse, which stood calmly surveying him, he coiled his long lariat and prepared to catch him.

His lariat flew from his hand with great force, and straight as an arrow went toward the head of the horse.

But the sergeant's horse seemed to avoid the noose, for he quickly ducked his head and the coil struck him on the neck and failed to catch.

But at the same instant there came a whizzing sound from one side of the redskin, a dark object floated in the air, a noose encircled the body of the Indian, and with a sharp twang he was dragged from the back of his pony to the ground.

The pony wheeling in fright, the redskin fell heavily with stunning force, and before he could realize what had happened there bounded a form toward him, a quick turn of the lasso was taken around his neck and he was choked so as to prevent an outcry or resistance.

Raising him in his strong arms, the sergeant bore him back into the cañon, where Lieutenant Worthington and Scout Palmer had witnessed the clever capture.

"I'll bring his pony in, too, sir," said Sergeant Farrar, and in a short while he came back with the Indian's pony and suggested that they take the prisoner beyond the hearing of an outcry should he attempt to give warning of danger to his comrades.

So the prisoner was taken quickly back to the camp, and there, under the care of Surgeon Mead, he rallied from the choking he had received from the sergeant.

To the surprise of the lieutenant and those about him, who did not know that he spoke the Indian tongue, the sergeant addressed his captive in Cheyenne, speaking fluently.

The Cheyenne seemed surprised at hearing his native language spoken by a paleface, then glanced fixedly into his face for a moment and responded to what the sergeant had said to him.

For a few minutes the two talked together, only Scout Hardin being able now and then to pick up a word.

Then the sergeant turned to Lieutenant Worthington and said:

"I told him, sir, that we knew of his camp across the river, and at the other fords, but that we were searching for Pa-e-has-ka, and unless he told me the truth about him I would scalp him and send him back to his people like a disgraced squaw."

"And what does he say, sergeant?"

"That he only knows that the scout pursued the white outlaw chief on the day of the battle, for he was with Iron Face in that fight, belonging to the chief's band, and that Red Hand stated that he had gone on across the upper ford to the Indian village, to bring more warriors to the scene, and had not seen the chief of scouts."

"Do you believe him, sergeant?"

"I do, sir, for he would be only too glad to let me know that Buffalo Bill had been killed or captured.

"He says also, sir, that when the outlaw captain heard that Buffalo Bill had gone in chase of him, he asked Iron Face to send his young warriors on his trail and capture him, but all had come in with the same report, that they had tracked the scout to a spot on their side of

the river bank, where the trail ended, for either the horse had been forced to leap from the cliff on that side, or he had been thrown off for some purpose, and that Buffalo Bill had taken the chances of swimming across the stream, where the river was wide and rapid, though upon the other shore it was possible to land, if he reached it.

"Indian scouts had gone up to the spot on the other shore and searched for some sign of a trail where a horse or man had left the water, but none was found, and it was the belief of the chief and also of Captain Red Hand that the great scout had attempted to swim across the river and both he and his horse had been drowned."

"Then that means that Buffalo Bill is dead," sadly said Lieutenant Worthington.

"On the contrary, sir, it looks to me as though Buffalo Bill was alive and unharmed, knowing the man as I do," was the response of Sergeant Farrar.

In spite of the sergeant's hope of Buffalo Bill's being all right, though naturally in the greatest danger, men seemed to believe that the scout had at last met his fate.

He was as cunning as an Indian in all border craft, and was true, with undaunted pluck and endurance, added superior intelligence also to aid him, they agreed; but he had gone off on the trail of the outlaw chief, he had crossed to the Indian side of the river; then had misled him, and, completely hemmed in, he had taken the chances of crossing the river by swimming.

Had he done so, it was argued, it was on the very eve of the fight, the night following, or the next morning.

If he had gotten across he surely, had his horse failed in the swim, would have reached the fort on foot some time before.

Not doing so, it looked bad for the scout.

Even his own men were doubtful now of his safety, and a general talk was held, the young lieutenant being anxious to discover if some one might not be able to advance a theory which escaped the scouts' minds, his own, and the sergeant's.

But the "talk" resulted in no new discoveries, and the lieutenant turned again to the sergeant.

"You still cling to the belief in Cody's safety, sergeant?"

"I do, sir."

"Upon what basis?"

"Well, sir, the Indian prisoner there may not have told the truth, but he appears to have done so, and the presence of the outlaw chief alive proves that he was not killed by the scout and killed.

"Had he killed Buffalo Bill the Indians would have been very triumphant in their bearing, as well as aggressive."

sive, and such would have been the case had they captured him.

"But, on the contrary, they are quiet at the fords, as though only to guard against an advance upon their village, and this Indian tells what appears to me to be a very straight story."

"True, but the scout is human and may have been drowned crossing the river."

"Yes, sir; but Buffalo Bill, daring as he is, would not have attempted to swim the river without a fair chance that he could make it."

"With the Indians excited, frightened and defeated, he would have done nothing rash without being forced to it, and had they driven him to the cliff, where he was forced to jump over, this redskin would have known it and been only too glad to tell."

"No, sir, the scout would have tried to make his way back to the ford before he took such a desperate chance as a leap from the cliff."

"Then where do you think he is?"

"Lying quiet somewhere, sir, until he can make his way out of the peril he is in from being completely surrounded."

"But some of those keen-eyed redskins would have surely found him."

"True, sir, they might have found ninety-nine men in a hundred, but they are on the track of one who can out-Injun any Injun, and who knows his danger and can cover up his tracks."

"You give me hope again, sergeant."

"You know, lieutenant, all said that the coach went down, that night of the storm, with the bridge, except one."

"Yes."

"That one exception was Buffalo Bill."

"That is so."

"He quietly held his peace, went to work, and found out just what had become of the coach."

"He has been reported slain scores of times, he has been lost also to view time and again, has been shot at, racked, threatened, and yet always turns up smiling, and do not believe he is now dead, for his past record is against the thought, in my mind, sir."

"But the pitcher went once too often to the well, sergeant."

"Very true, sir; but I have a plan to propose, sir, if you please."

"Out with it, sergeant."

"I have had some experience with Indians, sir, and I speak their language well."

"You certainly do."

"Redskin togs which I brought along with me, paint, and feathers, for I came prepared for a disguise if neces-

sary, while I have here the Indian pony, will do the trick."

"Well?"

"You can keep the Indian prisoner here, sir, for no other redskin saw him come across the river, and it will not be known what became of him, and I can cross at dark and once on the other side I can take care of myself."

The lieutenant shook his head, and, not heeding it, the sergeant went on to say:

"When it is dawn I can take the trail that Buffalo Bill went, and I will have a look at the cliff and the surrounding country, and I can get an idea of what the scout did from putting myself in his place."

"And you will meet with his fate, for I can hardly hope that he is alive."

"I will not meet with any danger that I cannot rescue myself from, sir."

"Don't be overconfident, sergeant."

Sergeant Farrar made no immediate reply; but, after a moment's thought, arose and said:

"May I speak to you apart, sir?"

The lieutenant walked aside with the sergeant, who said:

"Lieutenant Worthington, I am not a man who is seeking fame through reckless disregard of life, for now, sir, I have much, everything to live for; but I know the frontier thoroughly, better than you know; I have dwelt in Indian villages, and I assure you, sir, that, should I be captured by the redskins, I have a means of protecting myself which I cannot explain to you, sir, but it is sure."

Determined to carry his point, Sergeant Farrar went on:

"Buffalo Bill has risked his life hundreds of times for others; he saved my daughter from Red Hand, and he is now in desperate danger from which I may be able to help him escape."

"But how, sergeant?"

"I will show you, sir, by having that Indian come here, and talk with him."

"You watch closely, though not appearing to do so, just what I do, and the result on him, and you will discover that I hold a secret power, which I can and will exert, if forced to do so by being captured or brought face to face with the Indians."

"You always were a mystery, sergeant, and your words but deepen the riddle."

"I have been a mystery at times to myself, sir; but some time in the future the clouds may pass away and I may be better known."

"The past with me is buried, or I hope soon will be, in the grave of forgetfulness; memories and heartaches

will no longer haunt me, and I will live for the future and what it holds in store for me; but, pardon me, lieutenant, for I had no desire to speak of myself, sir, so please forget my words, and now I will give you the test of a secret power that I hold over the redskins."

The sergeant then walked over to where the redskin was, and, leading him apart, but where the lieutenant and no one else could see what was done, he began to talk to him.

The Indian aroused, looked surprised, and the sergeant threw open his uniform jacket, unfastened his shirt, and exposed his breast to the gaze of the prisoner.

That there was something there was evident from the actions of the Indian, though what it was Lieutenant Worthington could not see.

The redskin gazed an instant, then raised his hands to his forehead, clasping them there while he bent his head until it was on a level with the sergeant's broad chest.

His feet were manacled, but his hands were free, and the action was one of deep respect, awe and admiration.

The sergeant quickly fastened his shirt again, buttoned up his jacket and then held a long conversation with the Indian, after which he returned him to his place under guard of a soldier.

It was not until half an hour had passed that he rejoined the lieutenant at a place where the redskin could not see them talking together, for he had made a signal which the officer understood and so walked away.

"May I ask, sir, if you saw anything strange in my interview with that redskin?"

"Yes, I saw that you made some sign, showed him some mark, and that he at once acknowledged it with signs of perfect respect."

"True, sir, and just as he did, others of his tribe, and the Shoshones, will do as well; so I again ask, sir, to be allowed to carry out my plan to go on a scout in search of Buffalo Bill."

"You are a strange man, sergeant, but I have perfect trust in you, and faith that you know just what you are about, so I will no longer withhold my consent, though I feel that you take desperate chances in what you do."

"Life itself, sir, is a desperate chance," was the reply of the sergeant, and he at once began his arrangements for his departure, for night was near at hand.

When he was ready for his ride into the Indian lines, he appeared before the lieutenant, who started as he suddenly beheld him before him, for on the instant he supposed it was an Indian chief.

The sergeant had so skillfully painted his face, neck and hands that he looked the Indian out and out, and this was added to by a war bonnet of bright red feathers, such as only a head chief could wear and which he had brought with him from the fort, while hung from his

shoulder was a robe of white beaver skins, a dozen beaded in it at least.

"I am ready, sir, and I will take my own horse, riding the pony of the redskin might give me too much to explain, if I am seen."

"You seem to know your business well, sergeant. I have no suggestions to make, for you are the doctor. The sergeant smiled and replied:

"I hope to bring the patient back to life, sir; but may I ask you to do me a favor to take charge of this belt for me, and should I not return, give it to my daughter open in your presence."

"I will guard it safely, sergeant, and do as you request," and the officer took the belt, one that was made of buckskin, and seemed to be well filled with paper neatly placed in so as not to inconvenience the wearer.

"It is of value, sir."

"I will buckle it on under my fatigue coat and part with it, sergeant, until I place it in your daughter's hands, which I sincerely hope I shall not have to do, but I see that you have avoided the redskin."

"I did not wish him to see me in this rig, sir, and I ask that you put a double guard upon him to prevent any possibility of escape?"

"I will see to it that he does not, for if you did get into trouble over there, his return to his people might complicate matters."

"Decidedly, sir; but should I not return in three days you need not delay longer here, only do not give either Buffalo Bill or myself as dead until you know to be a fact," and with a grasp of the lieutenant's hand Sergeant Farrar mounted his horse and rode toward the river in the gathering gloom of night.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT BUFFALO BILL SAW.

Buffalo Bill was last seen dashing away in hot pursuit of the leader of the outlaws.

Having to ride the Indian pony he had captured in the corral, and there get his own matchless horse Luc had delayed him so that the outlaw had all of ten minutes' start of him.

But Buffalo Bill, in his lone scouting expeditions, ventured into the very neighborhood of the Indian village, and he knew the country well.

He was aware that the chief could only retreat by trail up the river for miles, and then by a flank march would reach the other ford.

After crossing it the trail would lead to the Indian village, and that would be the way the chief would do or less go.

As there was no turning off point, speed was

would be required to overtake the outlaw, and the scout was anxious to come up with him as soon as possible and end the affair.

He felt glad that it would be a death shot for the outlaw, rather than capture and being taken to the fort, where he would be hanged, thus bringing a deeper sorrow upon his unfortunate wife.

Under other circumstances, were it not for that poor wife the scout would have been more than content to let the outlaw suffer the penalty for his many crimes as he justly deserved, at the rope's end.

But now, should he come up with him, it would be a duel to the death between them.

The trail of the outlaw in his flight showed that he was urging his horse to his fullest speed.

Coming to a place among steep cliffs on either side, the scout saw that there was no trace of a trail.

But the outlaw could not have turned off, and so must have gone on, only the nature of the ground preventing any hoof-tracks being made.

Noticing ahead that there were places among the rocks where a horse and man could hide, Buffalo Bill went more cautiously.

The outlaw would doubtless expect to be pursued, and, therefore, he would prepare against his foe.

But the scout went on, though with greater caution.

Did it come to a trial of speed, he knew that Lucifer was more than a match for even the far-famed fleet steed of Captain Red Hand.

The nature of the ground still prevented any trace of the trail being seen, until suddenly the scout came to where it was revealed again.

It led on ahead along a cañon for a short distance, and then there was a cliff on the one side, and a hundred yards away the bank of the river.

The scout halted for a moment, and then a search showed that the trail of the outlaw's horse continued on around the cliff, here and there revealed where there were patches of earth covering the rocky ground.

It was not over three miles to the upper ford, and Buffalo Bill concluded that the outlaw must be all of a mile ahead of him.

So he decided to ride on to the upper ford, and if he did not come up with him to cross in pursuit.

But he hoped that the outlaw would come to a halt or he would overtake him, and thus bring on a duel between them, for there was a feud of long standing between Buffalo Bill and Red Hand, and he was more than willing to take his chances in an encounter with the chief.

Hurrying forward, he reached the ford without finding the outlaw. Without hesitation, however, he pressed across the river and was soon safe on the other side.

His horse scrambled up the bank, following the trail, which now led to higher ground.

When at the top of the hill he rested his horse a moment.

Just as he started on again, happening to glance over toward the river, Buffalo Bill was startled to see the outlaw ride into view on the same side of the river, and on a level with himself, for a cliff ran along the river at this point.

He did not see the scout, that was certain, but rode leisurely along, having just come into view from riding out of a ravine which he had to cross to continue on along the bank.

Buffalo Bill waited until he got directly opposite to him, so that he would not be able to dash at once to cover, and then he prepared to act.

He could have dropped the man from his saddle without a word, but he was too brave a man to take an advantage even of the outlaw.

No, he would give him warning at least of his presence, and that it must be a fight to the death between them.

"Hands up, pard!"

The voice of the scout rang out clear as a bell, determined and threateningly, and he had his rifle across his arm as he gave the ominous order.

Lucifer stood like a statue, facing the river, and the scout had the outlaw within four hundred feet of him, his rifle ready for use.

At the first word the outlaw's horse was reined back suddenly, and, first dropping his hand upon his revolver, he then grasped his rifle and swung it round for quick use, wholly unmindful of the command to raise his hands that came from Buffalo Bill.

Buffalo Bill felt that he had done his duty in warning the outlaw of his presence.

He had called out to him to raise his hands, with the hope that he would refuse, and, refusing, attempt to fight it out, for he did not wish to capture him and have to carry him to the fort.

The outlaw did just what the scout expected him to do, that is, attempt to fire on him.

He saw that the distance was beyond revolver range, and so he grasped his rifle.

The scout was not hurried in his movements.

He could have fired at the end of his sentence.

But now, as the outlaw had his rifle in hand, he ran his eyes along the sights and pulled the trigger.

The quick movement of the fugitive, however, startled his horse, and as he grasped the rein to restrain the animal, he did so with a jerk on the bit that seemed to madden the beast, as he reared wildly just as the scout pulled the trigger.

The bullet sped on, but whether to a target in the horse

or his rider, Buffalo Bill did not know, for the rearing animal staggered backward as the leaden messenger sped on its errand, and with a cry of fright almost human in its tones went over the cliff.

There was a human cry, too, as the rider went down with his horse, still in the saddle, and it came from the outlaw's lips.

Over the cliff with a crash went horse and rider, and Buffalo Bill cried:

"My God! they have plunged over together. That means the end of Chief Red Hand."

With the utterance of his words he spurred forward at full speed, halting within a few feet of the edge of the cliff, leaped from the back of his horse and gazed over.

He saw nothing of the man, but the horse was struggling madly with the swiftly flowing waters.

But the animal lasted only an instant, and was rolled under by the current, out of sight, just as the outlaw arose and threw up his arms in a mad struggle for life.

Could Buffalo Bill have saved the man's life then he would have done so, for he felt all the horror that comes to the one who looks on helpless to aid, and see a fellow-being drowned.

A moment passed, and horse and rider had disappeared forever from sight.

The torrent of waters rushed on, and, though the scout turned his glass down the stream, they did not rise again.

For a moment Buffalo Bill stood in silence.

Then, with a sigh, he said to his horse:

"The end has come, Lucifer, and we ran the outlaw chief to his death. Now to return to the camp—but what's that?"

He paused, for he heard down the river afar off the cries of the Indians.

It was probably the retreating party, and still it was strange they should come so far up the river before striking out for their camp.

They surely could not intend to make for the upper ford and start again in pursuit of the soldiers.

The cries continued, and from his position they seemed to be on the side of the river where he was.

To meet the Indian force here meant certain death, so he must hasten back to the upper ford.

Mounting, he went along the trail of the outlaw's horse, which was visible there.

It led a few hundred yards to a ravine, and here it was lost.

But some impulse caused the scout to ride down into the ravine, and the rocky surface left no trail.

He held on, supposing that the ravine would lead him out to the cliff trail again, but he suddenly came upon the river.

There he saw the trail of the outlaw's horse, as it came in view directly at the water's edge.

"Well, I did not know there was a break in the cliff banks here by which one could reach the river.

"If the redskins crowd me, I can swim across, though I would not relish such an undertaking.

"But the outlaw rode into the river here, for it is shallow, and, to have gained the cliff where I saw him, he must have come down the river, so I will go up."

Thus, keeping close along under the high cliff banks, where there was a sand and gravel deposit, and the water was but a foot in depth, he held his way for several hundred yards.

Then he came to another chasm in the cliff, and he entered it. The rocky walls towered a hundred feet above his head, and the narrow passageway was not five feet wide.

A stream, clear as glass, flowed down the chasm to the river, but here and there was the track of the outlaw's horse, so the scout held on.

At the mouth of the chasm where he had turned in he saw up the river half a mile landmarks that were familiar, revealing to him the upper ford.

After a ride of a quarter of a mile up the chasm it suddenly spread out into a veritable bowl, for it was a couple of acres in size, surrounded by precipitous cliffs hundreds of feet high, and which a squirrel could not climb, the edge being all fringed with pines.

But the bowl was like a garden of beauty, a bit of meadowland dotted with trees, with a deep, clear pool in it.

CHAPTER IX.

ON A STRANGE VENTURE.

"How on earth did that outlaw get off the trail on which I had pursued him, and come down there on the cliff where he met his doom?" asked Buffalo Bill of himself.

Then he saw what surprised him more still.

It was a shelter of pine boughs at the head of a dell, and by it were the remains of a camp fire, the ashes still warm.

"Well, here's a layout for you!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill, in surprise, and he at once staked his horse out and began a further search of the place.

There was evidence of some one having spent several days there, at least, as was revealed by the ashes of the camp fire, and the spots fed over by a horse, staked out.

Going again to the entrance of the cañon, Buffalo Bill again made a detour on foot, but with the same result—to find that there was but one entrance and exit.

Returning to his horse, he mounted and rode down to the entrance of the cañon at the river.

There he saw traces of a horse having made a landing on the gravel bar above the mouth of the chasm.

The tracks were still there upon the upper edge of the bar, for there it ended, shelving off into deep water.

Going back down stream the way he had come, Buffalo Bill took in the whole way carefully, and, reaching the little ravine, went up it to where he had turned in.

From that point two trails were visible, that of the outlaw's horse going down the bank, and his own coming to it.

"Why, this looks like the same trail, and would be taken for your own tracks, Lucifer, showing, apparently, that you had come this far, turned and gone back again.

"This is lucky, for the Indians will see it, will follow my trail to the river, then here and then back to the cliff, and their keen eyes will soon read that the horse went over there.

"They will think I lost my head, backed you over, good horse, and struck out afoot.

"Now, how on earth did the outlaw chief reach that place from above?

"He could do it in but one way, and that is in crossing the ford half a mile above, lose his footing and have his horse swept on down by the current to the bar.

"But he was not far enough ahead to do that.

"Then, too, that camp fire!

"Ah! I have it. It could not have been the chief whom I was pursuing, but one of his men, for, dressed alike and mounted upon a blood-bay horse, while also seeing him just there, I, perhaps, mistook him for Red Hand.

"Red Hand must have escaped, then, and the man who went over the cliff was one of his band, whose horse must have lost his footing somewhere above, and he was swept down the river until he gained a footing on the bar.

"Then he could not go against the stream to leave the place, and, until he found that he could get away by riding along the gravel bar, he remained in that camp.

"That is the way I read the signs, and I believe I am right.

"Well, I am in luck, for no Indian can find me in this retreat, and I will do some good by remaining a while and reconnoitering on foot, for I will be able to find out if I am right about the outlaw.

"I hear the warcries of the redskins now, and the shots of the soldiers, so they must be coming on up the trail, either on one side of the river or the other.

"I will take you back to that little valley, Lucifer, and then find out what is going on."

Back to the retreat the scout rode, and Lucifer was unsaddled and staked out to feed, and he seemed greatly

to enjoy the chance to crop the green, juicy grass about him.

Then Buffalo Bill stripped off his clothing, and, carrying them in his arms, waded along the bar back to the ravine, then up it to the cliff, and thence back to where he had turned off the outlaw chief's trail, where he had seen the horseman riding down the river bank, and whose fate had been so sudden.

Dressing himself again, Buffalo Bill went forward cautiously to reconnoiter.

He dared not retrace his way down the trail he had come until he knew the redskins were not there.

Going up the river, following the trail of the outlaw, his experienced eye told him that the rapid pace at which the horse had been kept had been slackened, and the scout went with greater caution.

Continuing on, he took in the situation between him and the river, and he was glad to see that there was no way of scaling the lofty cliffs and peaks to get into a position from whence one could look down into the little valley where he had left Lucifer.

He did not believe that a human foot had ever trod that little retreat until the outlaw had found it from having been swept down the river.

Still pressing on, Buffalo Bill soon came to a point that gave him a view of the upper ford.

What he saw caused an exclamation to break from his lips, for there sat the outlaw chief upon his horse, and with him a group of half-a-dozen Indians.

"I guess I'd better go into hiding in the retreat and wait until it is safe to leave there, for there is no chance to escape now, mounted or afoot," and, so saying, he retraced his way to the little valley up the chasm.

Returning to the retreat, the scout looked over his haversack and the traps he had with him.

Fortunately, he had carried his blanket roll and provisions on his saddle, along with his ammunition.

He was never one to go away unprepared for mishaps, and he smiled grimly as he muttered, after looking at the contents of his provision bag:

"Well, with economy, I have coffee, bacon and crackers enough to last me three or four days; but I'll see what to-morrow has in store for me.

"I sincerely hope the Indians were not reinforced from the village and that Captain Taylor has gained a telling victory over them.

"Then he should retreat at full speed, and I hope that he will do so, feeling sure that I can take care of myself.

"But it looks now as though I needed some one to take care of me.

"Well, I'll not worry, but get a good night's rest, after

a cold supper, and see what I can find out in the morning."

Having made his supper off of crackers and water the scout spread his blanket in the wicky-up left by the outlaw and turned in for the night, Lucifer being left to stroll at will, for he would never desert his master.

During the night the horse heard sounds he did not like, and he moved up quickly and rubbed his nose against the form of his master, as though to warn him of danger.

"I am awake, old fellow, and I hear the sounds," and the scout rubbed the nose of the faithful animal.

Then he arose and went down to the edge of the chasm.

Springing upon the back of Lucifer, who had followed him, he rode down to the entrance of the chasm and halted on the bar.

The sounds came from his side of the river, and were distinctly heard in the stillness of the night.

They were the tramping of hoofs and the low murmur of voices.

"The Indians are retreating up this shore of the river; so Captain Taylor did drive them all across, after all, and I suppose crossed after them when they stood at bay among the rocks on the river-bank trail.

"But they are on the move now, that is certain, and to-morrow I can retrace my way and join the captain at the lower ford, or follow him if he has retreated.

"Well, I'll get what sleep I can, and the rest will do us good, Lucifer."

So saying, the scout returned to his blankets, again turning his horse loose.

When he awoke in the morning he dared not build a fire, so his breakfast again consisted of crackers and cold water.

Then he saddled up and started out on the trail.

It was fortunate for him that he did not ride up out of the ravine before reconnoitering.

But his caution and knowledge of Indian nature prevented him from making this mistake, as he was sure that he had been seen to follow the chief in his flight, and, not having been discovered returning, the Indians would be certain to follow his trail, once they had no longer fear of the soldiers.

So he dismounted from his horse, leaving him in the ravine, while he climbed up the rocky bank and peered over.

"Ah! I thought so."

It was all that he said; but he had seen enough to cause him to quickly remount, turn Lucifer back toward the retreat and lose no time in getting there.

What he saw was a number of Indians standing upon a cliff just where the outlaw's horse had gone backward with him.

They were making gestures and talking as though excited.

"Now they think I urged my horse over there, and that is the end of Buffalo Bill," said he, grimly.

"But I still live, as they will find out if they hit upon my retreat, which I do not believe they will."

Having discovered that it was impossible to avoid detection should he venture forth on horseback or afoot, Buffalo Bill determined to remain in hiding all day, and at night to start out on a tour of inspection, and on foot.

Should he ride and be discovered, the chances, owing to the nature of the rock-locked trail along the river, were greatly against him should there be redskins at either ford.

But on foot he could readily hide, leave no trail, and get as near as he pleased to the Indians.

So all day long he slept, and, when darkness fell, built a small fire and cooked some bacon, toasted some cheese and crackers, and boiled a cup of coffee, so that he had a good supper, for he needed it.

Then he staked Lucifer out, not wishing to leave him loose while he was away from the secret camp, and, wading along the bar, he soon came out to the cliff where the outlaw had lost his life.

He decided to go first to the upper ford, for, if he could cross there, he would be safe, as, once over the river, he knew the country well, and could go in search of Captain Taylor and his command or return to the fort.

He went along with the greatest caution, having changed his top boots for a pair of moccasins, which he always carried among his traps in case of need.

He had brought along his rifle also, and some food, in case he should get cornered for any length of time, as well as his canteen full of water and a blanket.

Suddenly he saw a horseman ahead, and he at once dodged into cover among the rocks, and his rifle was ready for quick use.

As the shadowy form drew nearer, he discovered that there were others behind him.

They were two Indians riding in single file, and they were talking as they rode along.

CHAPTER X.

IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

Buffalo Bill was sorely tempted to use his repeating rifle upon the three horsemen.

But the scout was a man who thought twice, and well for him was it that he did in this case.

He argued quickly in his mind that if he did kill the two, the shots would be heard at the upper ford, should there be a guard there, and their presence indicated that

ere was, while naturally the lower ford would also be
arded.

He would then have many redskins upon his track
thin the hour, and, unable to escape inland, he would
ve to return to his retreat.

Granting that they did not find him there, his pres-
ence would be known, and the trail between the two fords
arded and patrolled, thus cutting off all escape, unless
chose to swim the river, and that would be a most
dangerous undertaking, with no knowledge of a landing
on the other shore.

No, he was doubtless supposed to be dead, having gone
ver the cliff, as the redskins evidently thought, and he
ould not attract attention to his presence there unless
mpelled to do so in defense of his life.

It was a clear starlight night, and the horsemen were
ding slowly, while, as they drew near where Buffalo Bill
as crouching among the rocks, to his great amazement
e heard them talking in English.

Then he discovered that the one in advance was none
ther than the chief, Iron Face, and the one following
as Captain Red Hand.

It required giant strength of will on the part of Buffalo
Bill not to pull the trigger when he made this discovery;
ut he resisted, and heard the Indian chief say:

"I think there need be no more fear of Buffalo Bill, for
e surely went over that cliff with his horse."

"I agree with you, chief, but I regret that it is so, as
wished to end the career of Buffalo Bill myself, in my
own way.

"Had I known that he followed me the day they am-
ushed us at the ford, I would then have killed him,
ut——"

They passed out of hearing now, and Buffalo Bill heard
no more.

But he heard another sound that caused him to crouch
till closer in his hiding place.

For another horseman came in sight, and another and
others, until a score of warriors rode along the trail in
Indian file, silent as specters.

"They are the guard of the two chiefs.

"Lucky it is I thought twice before I pulled trigger
in Red Hand and Iron Face," muttered the scout.

"So they believe me dead, do they? and Red Hand re-
grets it, as he wished to end my life in his own pe-
culiar way?

"Well, some day we two will meet, and may the best
man win.

"Now to see if there is a guard at the upper ford, for
their presence here almost proves that there is."

So saying, the scout once more resumed his way, and
as he neared the ford he saw the glimmer of a light
ahead.

"It is a camp fire," he muttered.

There was no chance for him to scale the cliff on his
left and gain the open country, for the nature of the sur-
roundings prevented; but he crept nearer and nearer until
he beheld, in a meadow plot off from the ford, the Indian
camp.

"There are fifty of them, if there is one.

"They have guarded the three fords, that is certain, but
I'll make sure of the two I can reach."

So saying, the scout retraced his steps along the trail.

He walked rapidly, for he had nearly a dozen miles to
make to the lower ford, and then return two-thirds of the
distance soon after midnight, and creeping forward with
the greatest caution, he drew near the ford to discover an
Indian sentinel, standing on a rock just where the trail
came down to cross the river.

He saw the reflection of camp fires against the rocks,
and this told him very plainly that the ford was guarded
also, perhaps by a larger force than that at the upper
crossing.

Could he have escaped from the cliff trail he was in, he
would have tried to discover if the third ford was also
guarded, though he felt assured that it was.

By slipping up on the sentinel he could end his use-
fulness very quickly, and thus cross the river.

But he did not wish to desert his splendid horse.

So he drew back silently into the trail and started upon
his return to the retreat.

He walked rapidly, and it was not yet dawn when he
reached the little camp; and at once he built a fire and
cooked a square meal, for he knew he would not dare
take another before nightfall again.

"Well, the redskins have been hit so hard of late that
they dread a raid upon their village, and so guard the
fords with a force large enough to check an advance and
give time for the whole tribe to get ready to resist.

"It is a wise scheme, only they need have no fear of an
attack.

"Now for a long rest," and, fatigued by his night's
walk, he threw himself upon his blankets and sank to
sleep just as the eastern skies brightened under the ap-
proach of day.

When night came on again, Buffalo Bill was again
ready to begin reconnoitering.

He began to fret under the delay he was put to, and
was most anxious to escape in some way from the peril
he was in, which, however, was not as much dreaded as
was the time he would have to lose.

He well knew that Captain Taylor and the command
feared that he had been killed or captured, and he was
fearful that his band of scouts might attempt some des-
perate method of discovering what had been his fate.

As soon as he had his supper the next night, he prepared to leave.

He hung his saddle and bridle on a tree, and, with his large bowie knife, had cut a number of poles, which he put across the narrow entrance to the little valley, thus allowing him to erect a barrier that would keep Lucifer in and give him the freedom of the whole place.

"I've got to leave you, old pard, but I hope only for a short while, for it would be like giving up my best girl to leave you.

"You can't eat up all the grass and drink up the water here in a year, if you tried, so you'll be all right, only don't get lonesome and neigh.

"You understand, don't neigh, or you'll have some red-skin astride of you for the future if you do.

"Good-by, old boy," and the scout affectionately patted the horse, who seemed to understand just what had been said to him and rubbed his head affectionately against his master's shoulder.

Buffalo Bill was a good walker, and he drew near the ford two hours after turning into the trail.

But suddenly his keen hearing detected a sound ahead of him, and, always on the alert, he quickly looked about him and saw a large rock near, behind which he took refuge.

Buffalo Bill had hardly more than reached there when he saw an Indian horseman coming slowly along, the moon revealing him distinctly.

"Now is my chance, for, if I can catch him, his rig and horse will get me across in the disguise of an Indian," muttered Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XI.

FALSE OR TRUE.

When Sergeant Farrar went off on his bold venture of deliberately crossing the river in the disguise of an Indian, and in the face of the guard there, he rode down the trail without the slightest hesitation, as though he did not dread the consequences.

He entered the stream and slowly allowed his horse to go toward the other shore.

He knew that if the Indian guard was doing his duty, and Indian guards generally do, seldom being caught napping, that he would be discovered by the time he got half across.

In this discovery, he felt, lay his greatest danger, for he might be fired on at once.

But this he must risk, and hoping that as the guard could discover, in the light of the new moon, that there was only one person to fear, and would await his reaching the other shore before he began hostilities, he pushed on.

There was the hope, too, that his war bonnet might also be recognized, and, supposed to be a redskin, would not be fired upon.

But, whatever the risks he ran, he pressed boldly ward, and was drawing near the other shore, when a quick eye detected a form spring from a rock and rapidly away in the direction of the Indian camp.

"He has run off in alarm, or there are two sentinels there, and he has gone to give warning to the camp," said the sergeant.

But he held on as before, and as he got nearly to the shore he began to sing, in the Indian tongue, a war battle-song.

Almost instantly a form appeared on the bank, rising from among the rocks, and the sergeant called out:

"Does my brother know the White Wolf, the pale brother of the great Chief Iron Face?"

With a bound the Indian sentinel sprang to the side of the horse of the sergeant; his hands were clasped upon his forehead, and he said, earnestly:

"The Lone Fox knows the paleface brother of Iron Face, the great White Wolf, and welcomes him."

"Let him know that there will be many braves here soon, for the Lone Fox saw the White Wolf coming, and, believing he was a paleface foe, sent for his brothers."

The sergeant had not long to wait, as the Indian band came from the camp at a swinging trot, and the chief in charge of them at once showed respect for the White Wolf, when the Lone Fox said:

"Let my brothers know that this is the great medicine chief, White Wolf, returned to the tepees of his people."

Over to the camp the sergeant was led, and, dismounting from his horse, he sat down by the camp fire while the Indians gathered about him with almost reverent manner toward him, and great interest was shown in his coming among them.

Surely their welcome of him revealed the fact that his name of White Wolf was well known to them, and in case his being a paleface was not only forgiven, but appeared to hold some subtle, mysterious influence over them.

When the pipe had gone the round of each brave, the sergeant said:

"I come back among my red brothers to tell them of great danger."

All were at once silent as statues and most deeply interested, while the sergeant continued:

"Since I last dwelt in the tepees of my red brothers, their medicine chief, I have been a captive among palefaces, my own people, for they have kept upon the eye of the panther."

at dwelling among them, I have been able to do good for my red brothers, and at the right time will find that the White Wolf can strike a terrible blow. Let my red brothers now guard against a surprise, for on the other side of the river, in hiding, are many of the palefaces, and they may attempt to cross any time and sweep on up to the villages in the mountains. They are many in number, and my red brothers could, by being warned, defend their homes against them guarding the mountain passes, for they have big wheels with them.

Do my brothers hear?"

It was very evident that the red brothers not only heard, but heeded, too, for they were drinking in every word uttered by the sergeant.

Let my red brothers first send runners to the other side to warn them of danger, as the paleface warriors will cross there, too, and guard the river near them by a dozen sentinel braves.

Let this be done now."

This was done at once by the chief ordering half a dozen of his young men to take positions along the river bank at short distances apart from the trail at the ford. A couple of hundred yards above it, and this was the position of sentinels that Buffalo Bill came upon in his effort to escape.

Others were dispatched to the other fords, a party of mounted warriors starting, while runners came in from another two bands to state, as was their custom, night after night, that no dangerous signs had been discovered across the shore in their front.

"I will send a runner to the great chief, Iron Face, to let my brothers here have heard what I have to say," continued the sergeant, after the runners had been dispatched and the extra sentinels placed on duty.

"I would ask the Fighting Bird," he said to the chief in command of the force at the ford, "if the scalp of the paleface scout, *Pa-e-has-ka*, the buffalo and man over, hangs in the tepee of the Iron Face?"

The scalp of *Pa-e-has-ka* does not hang in the tepee of the Iron Face."

The sergeant showed plainly that he received with surprise the response of the Fighting Bird regarding the finding of Buffalo Bill's scalp, for he said:

"The white chief came with the soldiers to kill my red brothers, and he crossed the river, and was not seen again by any of the soldiers. Why did my red brothers not get his scalp?"

The Fighting Bird replied:

"The great white scalp hunter did cross the river, and

he took the trail of Red Hand, the friend of the Iron Face.

"The Red Hand did not see the scalp taker, and he came back with no story of his killing him.

"My braves then went on the trail of *Pa-e-has-ka*, and they tracked him to the river bank, where there was a high cliff, and over it went the horse of the white hunter, for that was visible to all the eyes of my braves, and to the eyes of the great chief, Iron Face, and the Red Hand."

"But did the paleface scout not go over the cliff with his horse?"

"The Fighting Bird does not know; his young men do not know—the Great Spirit knows."

"You have not been able to trail him?"

"Only to the cliff where the trail shows that his horse went over, and my young men all think that the great scalp-taker has gone to the happy hunting grounds in the waters of the river."

"Let the Fighting Bird know that it is to find the great scout that the paleface warriors are on the warpath now; to avenge him if slain, to rescue him if he is a prisoner. That is why the White Wolf is here to-night, to warn his red brothers."

The Fighting Bird and all seemed to be much pleased with the warning given them by this mysterious white man, who came into their midst, painted and disguised as a redskin, wearing the war bonnet of a chief, the sacred robes of the white braves, and bearing the title of an honored chief in their midst, one whom they welcomed with joy and received with almost an air of reverence, through some cause.

After some further conversation with the chief and those about him, the sergeant said:

"The White Wolf would now send a runner to the Iron Face, telling him of his coming again among his people."

The Fighting Bird at once selected a young warrior, and bade him get his pony and be ready to go with a message from the White Wolf.

"The Red Snake is ready," said the young warrior, as he appeared five minutes after, leading his pony, and halted before the sergeant.

"Let the Red Snake hear, then, the words of the White Wolf," said the sergeant, impressively.

The sergeant went on to tell the Red Snake more than he was to say to the Iron Face:

"Let the Iron Face know that the White Wolf goes back among the palefaces, when he has visited the grand camps at the other fords, and that he will learn all that he can, so as to bring due warning."

The young Indian made a sign, such as only would be given a great chief, threw himself into his saddle, and was off like the wind.

Then the sergeant again turned to Fighting Bird, and, leading him apart from the other warriors, who were grouped about the camp fire, he talked long and earnestly with him.

Then the two came to the camp fire again, the sergeant waved his hand to the assembled warriors, and, mounting his horse, rode slowly away from the camp.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SURPRISE.

After riding for some little distance, he half came to a halt, as though he was inclined to turn back.

Suddenly over his head circled a coil, a noose settled around his neck and he was dragged backward from his saddle.

By the time he had reached the ground he was in the grasp of a powerful man whose hand was feeling for his throat.

The sergeant was a powerful man himself, and, standing six feet, he had seldom met his equal in strength.

But as the sergeant fell to the ground, and his captor sprang upon him and felt for his throat with iron grip, the moon, just peering over the mountain top, fell full upon the face and form of the man, revealing the features distinctly.

"Buffalo Bill!"

At the call of the sergeant, the deep voice, the words spoken in perfect English and the call of his own name, Buffalo Bill's hand was stayed as it was near the throat, and he looked fixedly down upon the fallen man.

"No Indian can speak English like that," said the scout.

"No, nor am I an Indian, Buffalo Bill."

"Then you are Red Hand, the outlaw, in disguise, and——"

"I am Sergeant Farrar," said the soldier, quickly, as he saw that Buffalo Bill was preparing for a death struggle again, believing that he had the outlaw chief to deal with.

"Great God! Sergeant Farrar? And to think that I intended to kill you," and Buffalo Bill grasped the hand of the sergeant, who sprang quickly to his feet, and said:

"I recognized you as you bent over me, so called your name."

"Yes, I believed you an Indian, and I laid in wait to catch you."

"I dared not fire a shot here, so used my lariat, and had you not spoken, I would have driven my knife in your heart as soon as I got a grip upon your throat to prevent an outcry. Thank God, you did speak, sergeant, for I tremble now as I recall how close was your call from death."

"I saw your knife, and knew if I could not grasp Indian my fate was sealed. Then I recognized you, w me too, thank Heaven that I did not die by your le left Buffalo Bill, you whom I regard as I would a brother."

"The feeling is mutual, sergeant. But come, so, seek a hiding-place beyond yonder rock, for any mutlaw an Indian may come along."

"True—hark! one is coming now, and from the Vhen ford, for I hear the hoof-falls of a single horse. ig the necessary that I meet him, so you fly to cover at ered

Buffalo Bill obeyed, and with a few panther-like with gained the hiding-place he had left.

A second later a horseman came into view, and lie sergeant called out to him in the Indian tongue. p an

From his hiding-place Buffalo Bill heard what phen i between the sergeant and the Indian horseman. he fo

The latter was a runner from the further ford, and the going to report to Fighting Bird, who was the ran how chief of the bands at the three fords. go to

He had met comrades on the way who had told him th the coming of the medicine-chief, White Wolf, and hen warning of danger he had given them of an attack I fe the soldiers.

"Well, if that does not beat all I ever saw or hea i, M Yo I w I a I v When the Indian rode on once more, Buffalo the the led da th vaw ptu ief ed cre

came out, and, joining the sergeant, said:

"Now, sergeant, what does this remarkable masq ading of yours mean?"

There was a tone of suspicion in the scout's vaw which the soldier could not but observe, but he made ptu comment, and replied:

"It means that I came here to find you."

"Indeed, and disguised as an Indian?"

"Yes, for I had a disguise with me, one I brow A from the fort, intending to use it if necessary, yet a until I was convinced that it was necessary." ou

"And you speak the redskin lingo like a native?" "I

"Yes, I speak it like an Indian."

"And your disguise is perfect."

"Oh, yes, I have made up before as a redskin." ea

"When did you leave the fort, sergeant?" E

"Two nights ago."

"And came here alone to seek me?"

"I came here across the river alone, to seek you, pi Cody, but there are others over yonder who are waiti for your return."

"Ah! Captain Taylor's command is still there, ther

"Oh, no, Captain Taylor retreated the night follow his battle there at the ford, and it was well that he did o

as the Indians sent down a very large force which, with a few men, he could not have withstood.

He left five of your men to try and find you, and returned to the fort to report that they were unable to do so, and their fear was that you had been killed by an outlaw chief, for they saw him across the river with Face and his warriors.

When they came back without you, and told about finding the outlaw, Lieutenant Worthington at once volunteered and asked to go and look you up, taking picked men with him.

The colonel granted his request on condition that two other lieutenants should follow by each trail, with a top and a light gun, and camp within aiding distance."

Then in his quiet way the sergeant told the whole story, the force being sent out under Lieutenant Worthington, and their fear that he, Buffalo Bill, had been killed, and how he had determined, disguised as an Indian chief, to go to the camps of the redskins and learn what had happened to the fate of the scout.

Then he added:

"I feel that it is due you to explain my position to you, Mr. Cody, and I will.

"You shall know my secret in full.

"I was a rich man when the Civil War broke out and had a happy home with my wife and daughter.

"I went into the Confederate Army and at the close of the war commanded a regiment; but my wife had been killed by an assassin, my home was ruined, and leaving my daughter with friends I went to Texas, was charged with committing a murder of which I was not guilty. I saw that I would be hanged, so made my escape, was captured later by Indians, and because I cured their chief of illness, for I am a physician, I was made their Medicine Chief, and upon my breast was tattooed the sacred bow and arrow, which every redskin will respect.

"After several years I left them and joined the army as a private soldier. Such is my story, my secret, if you will.

"I had started on my trail from the camp to find you when you brought it to a very sudden and very nearly fatal end by lassoing me, and the one I sought was revealed to me."

Buffalo Bill listened to the story told by Sergeant Farrar with deepest interest.

When he concluded, he frankly held out his hand and said, in an earnest tone:

"Sergeant Farrar, I ask your humble pardon; I ask you to forgive me, for in my heart a while ago I had a pang of suspicion against you.

"I heard your words to the Indian, regarding a large force of troops on the other side, and it did look as though

you were playing a double game, one of treachery against your own people.

"I am ashamed of the thought, and again I ask you to forgive me."

"Willingly, Mr. Cody, for I assure you my actions were against me without full explanation, while I spoke the Indian tongue perfectly, something you were not aware of, as long as you have known me, and I was also rigged out as a redskin chief.

"It was to clear myself of suspicion that I made the very long explanation I have at a time when every moment is precious, for you are in danger here, as the power I hold could not save you from death, were you taken."

"I thank you, sergeant, and now we will be still better friends. But you speak of my danger here? I have been fully aware of it, and only to-night did I desert my splendid horse, hoping to get away afoot, find Captain Taylor, and make a dash across and regain him, while dealing the Indians another severe blow."

And Buffalo Bill told the story also of how he had seen the outlaw, mistaken him for the chief he was in pursuit of, and then had trailed him to his lair. He gave his views of how he had doubtless gotten there through his horse losing his footing in crossing and by being swept down the current had found the sand-bar under the high cliff banks.

"Well, that is remarkable," exclaimed the sergeant, as Buffalo Bill finished. "Is your horse there now?"

"He is."

"You must not lose that splendid animal, Buffalo Bill."

"I do not wish to."

"Come, we will go that way together, and then we will arrange a plan that we will meet to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night, sergeant?"

"Yes, for a plan for your escape with your horse has occurred to me."

"Out with it then, please."

"I will go with you to where you turn off to your retreat."

"Yes."

"You can get up behind me, for my horse will readily carry the double load for a few miles and we can make better time."

"All right, sergeant."

"You can go to your retreat when we reach the turn into it, while I go over to the upper ford."

"I see."

"I will have a talk with the Indian chief there, Fighting Bird, then return to the lower ford, as was my intention, cross the river before day breaks and remain all

day in camp, reporting to Lieutenant Worthington that I have found you."

"I understand."

"Then, after nightfall, I will recross the river."

"It will be dangerous."

"I shall arrange about that with the guards."

"And then?"

"I shall tell them that scouts are to be sent across to see if they are camped near the ford, and then I'll take their braves back some distance."

"I do not exactly catch your idea."

"I will go back with them, and place them in position so that they cannot see the ford."

"Ah!"

"And you, having come out of your hiding-place on horseback, can ride down to the ford and cross."

"Sergeant, you are a brick. But are you sure that you run no risk in again placing yourself in their power?"

"None at all."

"I hope you know."

"I do."

"What if Iron Face should have come down?"

"I'll be that much more sure of safety."

"Or the outlaw chief?"

"I'll not mind him."

"He may bring influence against you, knowing that you dwell at the fort."

"I do not fear any outside interference that will cause me trouble with Iron Face."

"Well, if you consider yourself safe in coming again, your plot is the one to carry out, for I can slip down to the ford and get across. I will hide my horse here, camp near, and when the Indians fall back, will get Lucifer and go to the ford."

"That is just it."

"But I must cover up my trail in some way, or it will be noticed down by the ford."

"I will ride my horse all about there, and up this way and back several times, so that it will cover any suspicion of your tracks, while on the trail from where you enter this one it will hardly be noticed even by those panther-eyed redskins."

"You are right, sergeant, and your plan goes. Now let us be moving."

CHAPTER XIII.

TAKING CHANCES.

The sergeant leaped into his saddle and bade Buffalo Bill spring up behind him, which he did.

The horse was a large one, long-bodied and strong, so did not wince at the double weight he carried.

At an easy canter he went along the trail and within

an hour, had reached the spot where Buffalo Bill turn off for his retreat.

"I leave you here, sergeant."

"All right; your retreat is near here, then?"

"Yes; about half a mile away."

"And I continue straight on to the upper ford?"

"Yes, sergeant; you could not lose your way, tried, for the cliffs rise high on that side all the way, and only a bird can scale them anywhere between the two fords—not even a squirrel could escape to the ford that way."

"Well, I'll go on and stay a short while with the Indians in the upper camp and then go back to the ford and cross in time to get over before dawn. But you not short for food?"

"You bet I am, and as hungry as a bear, for I have been on short rations ever since I crossed the river."

"I am glad, then, to supply you, for I came well supplied, not knowing just what would turn out. Take my haversack, as I will not need it now."

"Thanks," answered Buffalo Bill, eagerly, and he buckled the haversack from the sergeant's saddle and said:

"You bet I'll feast to-night."

After a few more words as to the time Buffalo Bill was to be at his post, the sergeant grasped his horse warmly and rode on his way through the now dark night, for the moon had set, the stars were hidden by fleecy clouds and the high cliffs shadowed the way all about.

Buffalo Bill went at once on the way to his retreat.

He was deeply impressed with the sergeant having come after him, risking his life as he did, for, in spite of his one-time power among the Indians, it might have been that he would be received as a foe.

The sergeant had taken big chances, had planned and had carried out his plot thus far without a single mistake.

Having reached his retreat, Buffalo Bill was greeted with a low whinny of welcome from Lucifer, who trotted up to him as he reached the barrier and sprang over.

"Well, old horse, you shall see the feasting, for I've got grub now to throw to the birds," said Buffalo Bill, as he walked rapidly toward his little camp.

Building a fire, he put on his small coffee pot and, as he opened the haversack, said:

"Crackers and toasted cheese don't go to-night, Lucifer, for I've got some potatoes here, a nice venison steak, chipped beef to broil, a hoeecake, ham—yes, and some bacon, crackers and cheese."

"I'll just have a supper that will make me see the grandmother's ghost; but, so long as I don't see Indian, I don't mind nightmares."

And, setting to work, the scout did enjoy a splendid

l, which, as he looked at his watch and saw that it considerably after midnight, caused him to say:

Well, I don't know whether to call this supper or breakfast.

But there's a bit left over for a snack during the day when I don't dare to build a fire to cook dinner by."

Having taken a pull at his pipe, Buffalo Bill then tipped his blankets about him and was soon sleeping.

He slept on until noon, as there was nothing to get up, though it was very evident that Lucifer could not understand such laziness in his master, for he would come and gaze at him curiously now and then, though making no attempt to awaken him.

At last the scout arose, took a plunge in the pool to refresh himself, and then ate the remains of his supper, and walked about the valley for exercise.

In the afternoon he took another nap, but at dark was awake, and, building a fire, cooked his supper.

Then he saddled up, took down the barrier and led Lucifer out of the valley.

"It's nip and tuck now, old pard, if we run upon a gang of redskins, for we are on the home trail, and don't you forget it."

He turned out of the basin, and, as he neared the trail, folded his two blankets and laid them end to end for Lucifer to walk on.

This he did until he reached the trail where other tracks were, when he strapped his blankets again to his saddle, listened attentively for awhile, and, mounting, rode on.

He was glad not to meet, or be overtaken by an Indian, or that meant a death struggle, with no place in which he could hide his horse until he came to the rock behind which he had hidden when he made his *sortie* to rope in the sergeant.

Leaving Lucifer there, and making him fast to one of the dwarf pines, he crept on toward the ford.

It was about three hours after sunset, the time when the sergeant had told him it was best to come. Creeping to a good point of lookout, he could find no traces of the Indian sentinels where they had stood the night before.

When Buffalo Bill saw that the sentinels were not in position, he did not know what to make of it.

After a thorough search with his glass, taking in the whole shore where the trail led to the water, he felt assured that they were gone.

What it meant he could not understand, for the sergeant had told him he would not move them back until the moon went down behind the mountain range, and he could watch their departure from his place of concealment.

Determined to make no venture with his horse without

being fully convinced that no sentinel was there, he crept to the place he had reached the night before.

Then he made a last bold effort and reached the trail.

Still anxious to discover the exact truth, for he knew if he rode down to the river and was seen he would have to fight it out, and that might compromise the sergeant if he was among the Indians, he crept over to have a look at the camp beyond the ridge.

All was dark there. The camp was, without doubt, deserted.

Buffalo Bill was even more puzzled, but came to the conclusion that the sergeant had come across sooner than he had expected to, and so had taken the Indians away from their posts without waiting for the moon to disappear.

Going back to his horse, and still walking most cautiously, he took up the blanket he had stood on to keep him from making any tracks there, and led the horse to the trail, so that it would appear as though the rider had simply ridden around the rock once.

Mounting, he rode very slowly down the trail leading to the river.

His horse seemed to realize the danger and trod lightly.

Buffalo Bill went slowly, and bent low in his saddle, almost lying down upon the back of his horse, for he wished to present no greater obstacle than was necessary to any keen-eyed lookout who might be watching the ford.

But he received no challenge, and heard no sound.

He could not but utter a sigh of relief, after the dangers and the suspense he had been through for days, and, riding to a point back from the river, he hitched his horse and returned on foot to the water's edge.

All was dark, and greater gloom was settling behind the mountain range.

He glanced out over the darkly-rolling river, yet saw nothing moving save the waters.

No sound broke the stillness save the murmur of the river as it rolled swiftly onward, the occasional hoot of an owl or yelp of a coyote that had found game of some kind.

Patiently the scout waited.

Then, as the moon had set, the hours began to lag and drag along, and he grew impatient.

He wondered what had become of the sergeant.

Surely he had been the one to take the Indians back from the river.

Had he done so?

Or had they gone back from some reason of their own?

Where was the sergeant?

This question again and again flitted through the scout's mind.

He recalled that the sergeant had left him to go to his retreat, while he went on to the upper ford.

Had harm befallen him there?

Had his power over the Indians, through some mysterious past association, been less than the sergeant supposed?

Then there came upon Buffalo Bill, like a flash of lightning, a suspicion that the sergeant was not playing fair toward the whites, though appearing to do so.

His knowledge of the Indian language, his splendid plainscraft, his previous silence as to his having been a dweller in a redskin tribe, all forced the thought of treachery upon the scout.

Then came the remembrance of the sergeant's gallant record.

How he had come alone to the fort and enlisted as a private soldier.

How he had made a name for himself by his splendid courage and skill, and had won promotion rapidly along the non-commissioned line, and, could he have been still further promoted by his immediate officers over him, he would have been given a commission.

Then came the remembrance of the sergeant's daughter, and when Buffalo Bill recalled how the splendid soldier had risked his life to save him, he said aloud:

"The thought of treachery in that man is unworthy of me—an insult to him.

"I feel that he is as true as steel, and will yet prove himself so.

"I am safe, and he may now be a captive to the Indians.

"If so, as he has risked his life for me, so I will rescue him.

"It is nearly dawn, and when it begins to grow light I will hunt up the camp of Lieutenant Worthington, and know what has become of the sergeant—ha! I heard a sound out on the river.

"Yes, it is the swash of water, and—a horseman is coming across.

"I see him now, and it is—— Great Scott! They are Indians!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SERGEANT'S RETURN.

When Sergeant Farrar left Buffalo Bill he picked his way to the Indian camp at the upper ford.

He received a like welcome there with the one at the other ford, and after a short stay set out upon his return to the point where he had crossed.

Fighting Bird was up and met him there, and, warning the chief against a surprise, he recrossed the ford and

rode into the camp, a couple of miles back, just as dawn began to break.

He hastily washed off his paint, changed his boots for his uniform, and then, as he saw that Lieutenant Worthington was up, he went to his camp a short distance off.

The lieutenant had awakened early, and at once on if the sergeant had returned.

The answer was in the affirmative, and, turning from his blanket bed, he was dressed when the sergeant appeared and joined him.

Sergeant Farrar's first question of the guard when he came to camp was whether the Indian prisoner was there.

He heard with pleasure that he was safe, and then the lieutenant, who greeted him warmly and called on

"Come, Mead, and hear what the sergeant has to report."

The surgeon joined the two, also greeting the sergeant as he would a friend, and Lieutenant Worthington

"Now, sergeant, I'll wager two to one you have news for us."

"You would win, sir, for I have."

"Buffalo Bill is a prisoner to the redskins?"

"He is a prisoner in one sense of the word, sir, and the redskins, and yet they are not aware that he is in their power."

"How so, sergeant?"

"He is in hiding in their lines, sir, and cannot get out."

"That is good news, to know that he is alive. We must make a dash and rescue him."

"We can save him without bloodshed, sir."

"You saw the Indians there?"

"Yes, sir; I was well received, and Fighting Bird, a brave young chief, is in command of the band across the ford. There are three bands, one at each ford, and each under an able chief, and they number from fifty to seventy men in the separate camps."

"We need not mind that number."

"Oh, yes, lieutenant, for they are on their guard. We placed them on their guard, as a matter of fact."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir. I was an Indian when with them, and while with them I had always been their friend, and while with the palefaces had been held partially in captivity.

"I made them believe that I slipped away to warn them, asked them about Buffalo Bill, and learned that they believed that he had thrown his horse over the ford and then attempted to swim across the river and was drowned.

"I told them then that Colonel Carr had a large force across the river, to come over at each ford, and, joining at a certain point on their side of the stream, to march

as dan their village to the rescue of Buffalo Bill, who it thought was their captive."

"So we have a large force, have we, sergeant?" exclaimed Lieutenant Worthington, smiling as he saw the horotegy the sergeant had used.

"A little lying in a good cause, sir, does me no harm." "I only wish we did have a large force."

"No need, sir, for Buffalo Bill will escape to-night."

"Heaven grant it! But how do you know, sergeant?"

"I arranged it with him, sir."

"Glorious!"

"But how did you find him?"

"I didn't sir; he found me."

"Ah!"

"He lassoed me for an Indian, dragged me from my horse, and, had I not recognized him and called out, my body would have been a scabbard for his bowie-knife."

"I was pulled back so suddenly that I was surprised, ere I was rightly stunned and hardly able to aid myself, for, strong as I know I am, sir, the scout is a giant of strength in comparison."

"He did not strike the fatal blow when I called his name, and, finding who I was, he at first doubted me; but soon we understood each other, and he returned to his retreat, where his horse was in hiding, and I went on to the upper ford and then back again to the one where he crossed."

"The Indians do not look for me over to-night, sir, but I am going, and the story I will tell them will draw them back from the ford, to ambush imaginary scouts who are coming over to reconnoiter, and then Buffalo Bill will come out of his hiding-place and cross."

"This is splendid news, sergeant, and you are a rival of Buffalo Bill in your plotting to out-Injun the Injuns, as the men say."

"But now to breakfast, and then get some sleep, after which we will talk it all over again."

Sergeant Farrar was very much fatigued after his night's work and the strain upon him, for he had had but little sleep for several nights.

Then, too, the scout's lasso had given his neck a slight wrench, and his fall from his horse had not been a light one.

He was, therefore, very willing to have his breakfast and then seek his blankets.

When he awoke he was much refreshed by a long sleep, and was ready for the supper which was placed before him.

Then he had a talk with Lieutenant Worthington, the result of which was that he told him that he intended to go over the river again soon after night set in and release the scout.

He explained all about his plan, and requested that

the men should be kept in camp, and, above all, that the prisoner should be most closely guarded.

"Should he escape now, sir, all would be lost, for I would be betrayed by him as being really a soldier and having been his captor."

"In fact, lieutenant, we must take that redskin back to the fort with us and keep him a prisoner there, as it may happen that again my services will be needed to enter the redskin lines."

"You are right, sergeant, and I will double iron the redskin and keep a guard constantly over him," answered the young officer, who then added:

"But I dread to see you again take the risk you do."

"There is no risk, sir, if that redskin does not escape."

"He shall not do that, if I have to execute him as a military necessity," and the lieutenant's look showed that he meant what he said:

"It would be hard on him, sir, yet what should be done if necessity demanded. It is what I would do if in command, for military law must be merciless," and the sergeant spoke like one who had held commands himself in the past and was one to do his duty though the stars fell.

Having rigged out again in his disguise, the sergeant mounted his horse and rode away, Lieutenant Worthington accompanying him for a short distance.

The young officer left him, with a firm grasp of the hand and wishes for success, and saw him ride into the dark timber.

"I guess he's all right, but his danger is great."

"The man grows upon me more and more, and I am sure that he has once held a high position and has been in command of men."

"Well, if he gets back in safety with Buffalo Bill, I will write the old senator, my uncle, telling him all that he has done, and begging him to use his influence to get him the commission he richly deserves."

So saying, the young officer gazed in silence for a while over the weird, wild scene, lit up by the moonlight, and then turning his horse, rode back to his little camp.

The sergeant meanwhile had ridden on down to the river, to suddenly discover, for he was cautious in his approach, that the Indians were crossing.

He was alarmed at this, fearing an attack upon the camp of Lieutenant Worthington, and making himself known at once by a call in the Indian tongue, he sought Biting Snake, the chief, to know what it meant.

The chief told him that he had crossed because he believed that it was best for him to do so, and he would not hear of returning to his old camp, though the sergeant urged him to do so.

The young chief further said that at dawn, as his

braves and ponies were well rested, he would ride to attack the soldiers in camp.

The fact was Chief Biting Snake was anxious to make a great name for himself.

Sergeant Farrar felt that he must act quickly, for Buffalo Bill was to be rescued and Lieutenant Worthington also to be warned of an attack by daylight.

"I must get Chief Cody across the river by the way I meant to take if the plan at the ford failed," he said, and he crossed the river, telling Biting Snake he was going on to Chief Fighting Bird's camp.

He felt certain, if Buffalo Bill came near the ford and observed that the Indians had crossed, he would, expecting his arrival, return to where they had parted the night before near the scout's retreat.

In this he was not mistaken, for as he neared the spot where they had parted, Buffalo Bill recognized the foot-fall of the large iron-shod horse, and gave a signal.

"Ho, Cody!"

"Yes."

"The Indians crossed to the other side under their fool chief Biting Snake, and spoiled our plan."

"Yes, I found it out just in time, so came back here, feeling you would understand it."

"I did, and you were wise; but we must get across, and by a way we have to risk, for that same young chief is going to attack Lieutenant Worthington's camp at dawn, hoping for glory."

"He'll go to glory if we can warn the lieutenant."

"Well, you wait here until I have crossed the river and have given a signal that I have struck the only break in the cliff where we can land.

"I will stand back in the crevice of the cliff and light a match, which you can see from this spot.

"Then go after your horse, return to this spot, and yelp like a coyote, when I will again signal you and keep matches burning to guide you straight to me.

"If you miss the landing, you are doomed."

"Then why do you make the attempt, when you can cross at the ford in safety."

"But you cannot; and I have made this crossing before, only in daylight; but I can do it, so do as I say, for here goes," and the sergeant boldly spurred into the rapid stream.

Buffalo Bill watched the form disappear in the darkness, and, waiting in terrible suspense, he gave an exclamation of delight when he saw the flash of a match across the river.

Then he was turning to go to his retreat when he heard hoof-falls, and, crouching low, beheld a horseman come into sight.

Right by him was a dwarf pine, and, taking a turn and it with one end of his lariat, he waited until the

horseman had passed within fifteen feet of him and the coil with unerring aim.

Then came the twang as the lariat was drawn taut, the horse bounded forward and the rider was dragged forward from his saddle to the hard earth and half strangled by the fall.

In a few seconds Buffalo Bill had him securely girt and bound, hands and feet, and, dragging him into the shadow of the dwarf pine, he left him while he went to the horse, which had halted a few rods distant.

The animal was easily caught and, mounting him, the scout rode into the retreat and quickly had him bridled and saddled.

Back he went then to where he had left his prisoner.

"You are a white man all right, I know; but it is dark to know who, though I half believe I have no mistake.

"Come, get into your saddle, and be quick, for we are only playing possum, I know.

"Quick, or I'll help you with the point of my knife." Thus urged, the prisoner obeyed, and the scout made him secure in his saddle with a turn of his lariat.

Then he gave a perfect imitation of the yelp of a coyote.

Quickly came a flash in answer from across the river.

Riding into the stream and leading his prisoner on horse, Buffalo Bill started across.

The signal flashes came bright and often, and headed up and across the stream the scout reached the crevice in the cliff with hardly a couple of yards to spare, and the lariat of the sergeant was thrown to him while there came the words:

"But who have you there, Mr. Cody?"

"We will soon know; but I believe that it is R. Hand, the outlaw and renegade."

"If so, you have made the capture of your life."

"And had the closest call of my life; but the game was be worth the risk, Sergeant Farrar," was the answer.

The sergeant now mounted his horse and led the way through the cliff, Buffalo Bill following with his prisoner.

A choking sound from the prisoner caused Buffalo Bill to halt and remove the gag from his mouth, saying:

"He can do no harm now, for we are on our side of the river."

"Is that man Sergeant Frank Farrar?" asked the prisoner, hoarsely.

"Yes."

"And you are Buffalo Bill?"

"I am so called."

"And you are taking me to the fort?"

"Yes."

"To be hanged?"

"That is your misfortune, not my fault."

"Wait a few minutes, for I have something to say."

"Frank, do you wish to hang me?"

"My God! you are my brother, Lamar!" hoarsely said the sergeant.

"I am, and will you see me hanged?"

"You, then, are Red Hand?"

"Yes, but you will let me go free, for Mr. Cody will ask it," pleadingly said the man.

"Mr. Cody, I do not ask it of you, and you shall know. This man is my twin brother, and from boyhood did all he could to ruin me, for he was born bad.

I forgave him everything until he tried to degrade me in the eyes of the woman I loved to win her from me.

She found out his perfidy and became my wife.

"I told you that my wife was murdered during the war and this man was her assassin.

"I told you that I was accused of being a murderer, and fled to save myself from the hangman.

"I was accused as the murdered man saw my twin brother and believed I had killed and robbed him.

"You rescued my daughter from this man's power, you and Lieutenant Worthington, and Lu told me that Red Hand was strongly like me in appearance; and I dreaded the worst then, especially as she said that his right hand bore a red stain, a birthmark, upon it, and that very mark will clear me now, for it was later known in Texas that the man accused of murder had a crimson hand, and it was called, for so his victim had stated on his death-bed.

"Some years ago a man so marked went to Texas and won and wedded there a beautiful woman.

"That woman would not believe in his guilt and followed his evil fortunes until you freed her from him.

"Now, you know just who your prisoner is, and, though I have pardoned much in the past, I will never forgive again—no, I do not ask his life at your hands."

The sergeant spoke rapidly and earnestly, for it cut him to the heart to tell the sad story.

"Sergeant, I feel deeply for you, but for this man there shall be no mercy, and Colonel Carr will so decide. I shall deliver him over to Lieutenant Worthington within half an hour."

Buffalo Bill spoke sternly, and the three moved on once more, the prisoner with bowed head.

The camp went wild with excitement when the sergeant returned with Buffalo Bill, and the excitement was intense when it was found that the latter had brought with him Red Hand, the renegade.

When told of the intended attack on his camp by Bit-

ing Snake and his half a hundred braves, Lieutenant Worthington at once decided to surprise the Indians, and the men were called to mount—all save a small guard for the prisoners, the redskin and Red Hand.

The attack proved a surprise and a victory, and, quickly beaten back across the river with heavy loss, the chief, Biting Snake, was no longer regarded with honor among his people, for he had disobeyed orders in crossing the ford as he had done.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

After a very close call from death, Buffalo Bill had been rescued, so the object of the expedition under Lieutenant Worthington had been a complete success.

Couriers were sent to the other forces with orders to retreat to the fort, and the following night Lieutenant Worthington and his party reached the military post, yet with a dead man in the saddle, for, as he rode along, Lamar Farrar, the Red Hand, had swallowed a dose of poison and had thus ended his evil life and cheated the hangman of his prey.

But who he was remained a secret between three persons—the sergeant, Lieutenant Walter Worthington and Buffalo Bill—until later, it was told to Lu Farrar and the beautiful and unhappy wife of the outlaw.

"You shall be my sister and my home shall be your home," said Lu Farrar, and her father added his wishes to those of his daughter.

Declining to seek a commission, as Colonel Carr suggested he should do, in the army, the sergeant asked for his discharge and was given it, when, with his daughter and Mrs. Lamar, he went to Texas and quickly cleared himself of the charges against him.

Then he established himself on a fine ranch, and thither went, a year later, two persons—one Captain Worthington and Buffalo Bill—the latter accompanying his friend, the young officer, to see him married to the prettiest girl in Texas—the daughter of Frank Farrar, who had worn both the Blue and the Gray, and of whom Buffalo Bill says:

"No truer man ever lived."

THE END.

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